



## Trump commutes former Illinois Gov. Blagojevich's sentence

CHICAGO (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday commuted what he called the "ridiculous" 14-year prison sentence handed out to former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich for political corruption, clearing the way for his release after more than eight years behind bars.

The Republican president said the punishment imposed on the Chicago Democrat and one-time "Celebrity Apprentice" con-

testant was excessive. "So he'll be able to go back home with his family," Trump told reporters in Washington. "That was a tremendously powerful, ridiculous sentence in my opinion and in the opinion of many others."

Blagojevich, 63, who hails from a state with a long history of pay-to-play schemes, was expected to walk out of prison later in the day.

**Continued on next page**



In this March 14, 2012, file photo, former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich speaks to the media outside his home in Chicago as his wife, Patti, wipes away tears a day before reporting to prison after his conviction on corruption charges.

Associated Press



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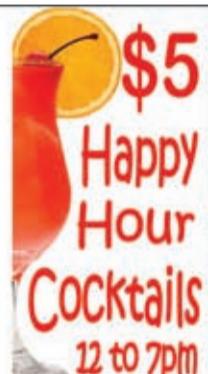
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Continued from front

He was convicted in 2011 of crimes that included seeking to sell an appointment to Barack Obama's old Senate seat and trying to shake down a children's hospital.

Trump had said repeatedly in recent years that he was considering taking executive action in Blagojevich's case, only to back away from the idea.

One of Blagojevich lawyers said she refused to believe it at first when word of her client's possible release began to spread, fearing that the president might not follow through.

"When it became obvious it was real, I got tears in my eyes," said Lauren Kaesberg. "It was overwhelming."

Others in Illinois, including the governor, said setting Blagojevich free was a mistake.

Trump "has abused his pardon power in inexplicable ways to reward his friends and condone corruption, and I deeply believe this pardon sends the wrong message at the wrong time," Gov. J.B. Pritzker said in a written statement.

Many Republicans agreed. "In a state where corrupt, machine-style politics is still all too common, it's important that those found guilty serve their prison sentence in its entirety," said the chairman of the Illinois GOP, Tim Schneider.

The White House cited support from several Illinois-based leaders, including the Rev. Jesse Jackson, as supporting Blagojevich's early release. More than 100 of his fellow inmates also sent in letters of support.

Trump also granted clemency to financier Michael Milken, who served two years in prison in the early 1990s after pleading guilty to violating U.S. securities laws, and pardoned for



Ziff Sistrunk of Chicago places a sign of support in front of the home of Patti Blagojevich, wife of former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich, in the Ravenswood neighborhood of Chicago Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2020.

Associated Press

mer New York Police Commissioner Bernie Kerik, who served just over three years for tax fraud and lying to the White House while being interviewed to be Homeland Security secretary.

The Illinois House in January 2009 voted 114-1 to impeach Blagojevich, and the state Senate voted unanimously to remove him, making him the first Illinois governor in history to be removed by lawmakers. He entered prison in March 2012.

After exhausting his last appeal in 2018, Blagojevich seemed destined to remain behind bars until his projected 2024 release date. His wife, Patti, went on a media blitz in 2018 to encourage Trump to step in, praising the president and likening the investigation of her husband to special prosecutor Robert Mueller's probe into Russian meddling in the 2016 election — a probe Trump long characterized as a "witch hunt."

At Blagojevich's home, his wife's sister, Deb Mell, emerged onto the porch after a rideshare driver arrived to deliver food. She said the logistics of the former governor's return were not complete and that Patti Blagojevich would not speak to reporters until her

husband is home.

"The kids are overjoyed and Patti's ecstatic," Mell said. Blagojevich's conviction was notable, even in a state where four of the last 10 governors have gone to prison for corruption. Judge James Zagel — who sentenced Blagojevich to the longest prison term yet for an Illinois politician — said when a governor "goes bad, the fabric of Illinois is torn and disfigured."

After his Dec. 9, 2008, arrest while still governor, Blagojevich became known for his foul-mouthed rants on wiretaps. On the most notorious recording, he gushed about profiting by naming someone to the seat Obama vacated to become president: "I've got this thing and it's f----- golden. And I'm just not giving it up for f----- nothing."

When Trump publicly broached the idea in May 2018 of intervening to free Blagojevich, he downplayed the former governor's crimes. He said Blagojevich was convicted for "being stupid, saying things that every other politician, you know, that many other politicians say." He said Blagojevich's sentence was too harsh.

Prosecutors have balked at the notion long promoted by Blagojevich that he en-

gaged in common political horse-trading and was a victim of an overzealous U.S. attorney, Patrick Fitzgerald. After Blagojevich's arrest, Fitzgerald said the governor had gone on "a political corruption crime spree" that would make Abraham Lincoln turn over in his grave.

A joint statement from Fitzgerald and the lead prosecutors at Blagojevich's trial, none of whom work in the Chicago U.S. Attorney's Office anymore, stopped short of criticizing Trump's decision. But they highlighted the convictions, including for trying to shake down the children's hospital, saying, "Mr. Blagojevich remains a felon."

Mueller — a subject of Trump's derision — was FBI director during the investigation into Blagojevich. Fitzgerald is now a private attorney for another former FBI director, James Comey, whom Trump dismissed from the agency in May 2017.

Trump expressed some sympathy for Blagojevich when he appeared on "Celebrity Apprentice" in 2010, before his first corruption trial started. When Trump "fired" Blagojevich as a contestant, he praised him for how he was fighting his criminal case, telling him, "You have a hell of a lot of guts."

He later poll-tested the matter, asking for a show of hands of those who supported clemency at an October 2019 fundraiser at his Chicago hotel. Most of the 200 to 300 attendees raised their hands, The Wall Street Journal reported, citing several people at the event.

On the same day, Trump told Chicago television station WLS that Blagojevich should not abandon hope of an early release.

"No, he should not at all give up hope, at all," Trump

said. "We are looking at it." Blagojevich's first trial ended with the jury unable to reach a verdict, except for a single conviction, for lying to the FBI.

At his second trial in 2011, Blagojevich testified, describing himself as a flawed dreamer grounded in his parents' working-class values. He sought to humanize himself to counteract the seemingly greedy governor heard on wiretap recordings played in court. He said the hours of FBI recordings were the ramblings of a politician who liked to think out loud.

He was convicted on 18 counts. The 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago in 2015 tossed out five of the convictions, including ones in which he offered to appoint someone to a high-paying job in the Senate.

The appeals court ordered the trial judge to resentence Blagojevich but suggested it would be appropriate to hand him the same sentence, given the gravity of the crimes. Blagojevich appeared via live video from prison during the 2016 resentencing and asked for leniency. The judge gave him the same 14-year term, saying it was below federal guidelines when he imposed it the first time. Blagojevich had once aspired to run for president himself but entered the Federal Correctional Institution Englewood in suburban Denver in 2012, disgraced and broke. Court documents filed by his lawyers in 2016 portrayed Blagojevich — known as brash in his days as governor — as humble and self-effacing, as well as an insightful life coach and lecturer on everything from the Civil War to Richard Nixon. Blagojevich, an Elvis Presley fan, also formed a prison band called "The Jailhouse Rockers." □



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## MIT to caption online videos after discrimination lawsuit

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER

**BOSTON (AP)** — The Massachusetts Institute of Technology has agreed to provide captions for more of its publicly available online videos as part of a settlement announced Tuesday

against MIT and Harvard in 2015 said people who were deaf or hard of hearing couldn't benefit from the schools' wealth of online educational resources because they had inaccurate captions or none at all.



In this July 16, 2019, file photo people walk past the Ray and Maria Stata Center building on the campus of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in Cambridge, Mass.

in a case that accused the school of discriminating against people who are deaf or hard of hearing. The settlement comes months after a similar deal was reached in a lawsuit brought against Harvard University by the National Association of the Deaf, which said the schools were discriminating against people with hearing disabilities by not adequately or accurately captioning videos of lectures and other programs it posts online. "Why would you not make your content accessible to everyone?" said Howard Rosenblum, CEO of the association. "We want to make sure that moving forward all the universities and colleges make themselves aware."

The lawsuits brought

Harvard and MIT both tried to dismiss the cases, arguing that the law doesn't require them to provide captioning for all their online content. But a judge ruled last year that content produced by and posted by the universities was subject to federal civil rights law. Under the settlement, MIT has agreed to provide captions for any audio or video content it creates and posts on its website, as well as the school's pages on outlets like YouTube and SoundCloud. It must also provide live captions for certain events that are streamed online, according to the settlement. Anything posted before Jan. 1, 2019, must be captioned or removed from public view only if someone requests it, according

to the consent decree. The agreement must be approved by a judge before it goes into effect. A spokeswoman for MIT didn't immediately return messages seeking comment Tuesday.

The consent decree says MIT "has and continues to deny that it violated any laws related to persons with disabilities or otherwise through posting or making available any online content."

The two settlements follow a U.S. Justice Department finding in 2015 that edX, an online platform created by the two universities, failed to make its courses accessible to those with vision or hearing disabilities. □



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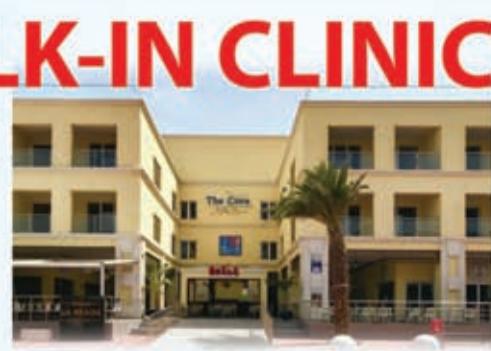
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## Bloomberg would sell business interests if elected president

By KATHLEEN RONAYNE

Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)

— Mike Bloomberg would sell the financial data and media company he created in the 1980s — which bears his name and made him a multibillionaire — if he is elected U.S. president, a top adviser said Tuesday.

Bloomberg would put Bloomberg LP into a blind trust, and the trustee would then sell the company, adviser Tim O'Brien said. Proceeds from the sale would go to Bloomberg Philanthropies, the charitable giving arm that funds causes from climate change to public health and grants for American cities.

The only restriction Bloomberg would put on the sale is that it not be sold to a foreign buyer or a private equity company, O'Brien said.

Bloomberg, a Democrat, is currently chief executive of the company.

"We want to be 180 degrees apart from Donald Trump around financial conflicts of interest," O'Brien told The Associated Press.

"We think it's one of the biggest stains on the presi-



Democratic presidential candidate and former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg speaks during a campaign rally at the Buffalo Soldier Museum in Houston, Thursday, Feb. 13, 2020. Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner stands at right.

Associated Press

dency, and Trump's record is his refusal to disengage himself in his own financial interests. And we want to be very transparent and clean and clear with voters about where Mike is on these things."

Indeed, as one of the world's wealthiest people,

Bloomberg would have an extraordinarily complicated financial picture to untangle if he wins the presidency. His commitment to selling the company stands in stark contrast to the Republican Trump, who refused to fully divest from his business, instead putting his

assets in a trust controlled by his two adult sons and a senior company executive. He has continued to make money from his properties. Bloomberg said in 2018, when he was considering a presidential run, that he would consider selling his business if elected. The

company is not currently for sale. He retained ownership in the company when he served as New York City mayor from 2002 to 2013, but gave up his title of chief executive.

O'Brien's comment comes amid increasing scrutiny of Bloomberg's wealth and business holdings from his rivals for the Democratic presidential nomination. He'll face them on the debate stage for the first time on Wednesday in Las Vegas.

If he won the White House, the exact timeline for a sale isn't clear, O'Brien said. There's also been no decision on what would happen to Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Bloomberg created his own company in 1981, after he was fired from the investment bank Salomon Brothers with a \$10 million severance payment. His new venture created the Bloomberg Terminal, a dedicated computer with proprietary software that allowed Wall Street traders, buyers and sellers to see financial transaction data in real time. □

## Veterans group: Pentagon broke agreement to reopen database

NORFOLK, Va. (AP) — The Pentagon has reneged on its agreement to reopen a vast records database that helps service members who are appealing a less-than-honorable discharge, a veterans group said Tuesday.

The National Veterans Legal Services Program said the Defense Department has failed to make public the "vast majority" of decisions made by military review boards over the last several years.

Military review boards grant or deny a veteran's request

to upgrade a less-than-honorable discharge. Veterans' lawyers study those past decisions in hopes of building successful arguments for their clients.

Appeals are being made at a time of growing recognition that a less-than-honorable discharge can stem from behaviors brought on by post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injuries.

Liberal consideration is supposed to be given to veterans with combat-related mental health conditions and to those who were sex-

ually assaulted while in the military.

Bart Stichman, executive director for the veterans group, said the Pentagon continues to break federal law and is harming "veteran advocates who rely on access to these decisions to help them represent and secure critical benefits for veterans and their families." Stichman's organization had sued the Pentagon over the matter in early January, alleging that hundreds of thousands of decisions have been publicly unavailable since April.

A few weeks later, Stichman said, the Pentagon had agreed to a timeline for releasing most of the records. But on Tuesday, the veterans group said access "continues to be severely limited." The U.S. Military said that some of the records had been made available, according to a recent court filing. But officials discovered that "some of the decisions still contained personal identifying information," which could not be made public under federal law and needed to be redacted.

Military officials said they regret that the personal information precluded them from meeting the deadlines they had agreed upon, their attorneys wrote in the court filing.

A court hearing to review the matter is scheduled for March 6 in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia.

The lawsuit over the records has already drawn the attention of 11 Democratic U.S. senators. They wrote a letter to military leaders in January asking when the records would become available again. □

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## Nebraska denies pardon for notorious killer's ex-girlfriend

By GRANT SCHULTE

**LINCOLN, Neb. (AP)** — Nebraska's pardons board refused Tuesday to pardon the murder conviction of the ex-girlfriend of Charles Starkweather, the infamous killer who went on a rampage in the 1950s that was later immortalized in movies, books and two hit songs.

The board voted 3-0 to deny the application from Carl Ann Fugate, even though some relatives of Starkweather's victims lobbied in her favor. The board is composed of Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts, Attorney General Doug Peterson and Secretary of State Bob Evnen, all Republicans. Fugate was 14 when Starkweather, then 19, went on a killing spree in 1957-58 that left 11 people dead in Nebraska and Wyoming, including her mother, step-father and baby half-sister. The murders stoked so much fear around Lincoln that law enforcement conducted a house-by-house search of the city and the governor contacted the Nebraska National Guard. It also formed a loose basis for the 1973 movie "Badlands," with Sissy Spacek and Martin Sheen, as well as other films. The killings were the subject of Bruce Springsteen's song, "Nebraska," and referenced in Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire."

Fugate spent 17 years in prison on a murder con-

viction before she was paroled in 1976. She has since married and lives in Michigan under the name Carl Ann Clair.

Starkweather was executed in 1959 at the age of 20. Fugate, now 76, wrote in her pardon application that the perception that she willingly joined Starkweather on a murder spree is "too much for me to bear anymore."

"Receiving a pardon may somehow alleviate this terrible burden," she wrote. After the vote, Peterson said he denied the application because the purpose of the pardons board is to restore a felon's rights, and Fugate's request was "much, much broader" than what board members could offer.

"That's not the role of the pardons board," he said. But the vote infuriated some of Fugate's allies, who were denied a chance to testify. Fugate applied for a pardon once before, in 1996, and was rejected. This time, she had an unusual ally — the granddaughter of two of Starkweather's victims.

Liza Ward, of Duxbury, Massachusetts, said she became convinced that Fugate was innocent after researching the case and visiting all the sites where people were killed. Ward is the granddaughter of S. Lauer and Clara Ward, who were killed in their Lincoln home in December 1958.

"There are a lot of people

who support her, and we're going to let her know that however we can," Ward said through tears after the board's vote. She said she started investigating the case to discover what had happened to her grandparents, and "the more I learned, the more I realized that something wasn't right."

Fugate's attorney, John S. Berry Sr., said his client sought clemency to bring her some closure in the case.

"She's not after anything else other than to clear her name," said Berry, who also co-wrote a book arguing that Fugate's conviction was a miscarriage of justice.

But Dave Ellis, a relative of another victim, said he was pleased with the board's decision. Ellis said he believes Fugate killed his first cousin once removed, Carol King, because King's body was partially mutilated after Starkweather raped her. Ellis said he thinks Fugate mutilated her out of "female rage."

Ward said she could find no evidence of Fugate's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt and noted that Starkweather was the prosecution's main witness against her, even though he had changed his story multiple times and was likely angry because Fugate had told him she never wanted to see him again.

Ward said she believes Fugate was a victim of Starkweather's and that the public's perception of her



**Paulette Neemann, left, and Dave Ellis, relatives of murdered victims of Charles Starkweather, hug in Lincoln, Neb., Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2020, before a hearing of the Nebraska Board of Pardons to consider a request for clemency from Carl Ann Clair, the 76-year-old former girlfriend of Charles Starkweather, who went on an infamous killing spree in Nebraska and Wyoming in the late 1950s.**

Associated Press

gate was a victim of Starkweather's and that the public's perception of her

guilt is based on misinformation and hearsay about the case. □

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# Boy Scouts seek bankruptcy, urge victims to step forward

By DAVID CRARY and  
BRADY McCOMBS  
AP National Writer

The Boy Scouts of America urged victims to come forward Tuesday as the historic, 110-year-old organization filed for bankruptcy protection in the first step toward creating a huge compensation fund for potentially thousands of men who were molested as youngsters decades ago by scoutmasters or other leaders.

The Scouts resorted to Chapter 11 in hopes of surviving a barrage of lawsuits, many of them made possible by recent changes in state laws to allow people to sue over long-ago sexual abuse.

Bankruptcy will enable the organization to put those cases on hold for now and continue operating. But ultimately the Boy Scouts could be forced to sell some of their vast property holdings, including campgrounds and hiking trails, to raise money for a victims' fund that could top \$1 billion.

The Boy Scouts estimated 1,000 to 5,000 victims will seek compensation.

"The BSA encourages victims to come forward to file a claim as the bankruptcy process moves forward," the organization said in a statement.

James Kretschmer of Houston, one of those suing, said he was molested by a Scout leader in the mid-1970s in the Spokane, Washington, area. The bankruptcy, he said, "is a shame because at its core and what it was supposed to be, the Boy Scouts is a beautiful organization."

"But you know, anything can be corrupted," he added. "And if they're not going to protect the people that they've entrusted with the children, then shut it down and move on."

More than 12,000 boys have been molested by 7,800 abusers since the 1920s, according to Boy Scout files revealed in court papers.

Evan Smola said two new victims had already called his law office in Chicago on



In this Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2020, photo, a statue stands outside the Boys Scouts of America headquarters in Irving, Texas.

Associated Press

Tuesday morning, bringing the firm's total to 319. "The opportunity to tell your story is a cathartic and healing experience," Smola said. "It's very painful when they actually do it, but getting it off your chest is a big step."

It will be up to the court to set a deadline for filing claims. The amount of money each victim will receive is likely to depend on what assets are turned over and how many people come forward.

The filing in Wilmington, Delaware, sets in motion what could be one of the biggest, most complex bankruptcies ever seen, given the Scouts' 50-state presence. The organization listed assets of \$1 billion to \$10 billion and liabilities of \$500 million to \$1 billion.

"We are outraged that there have been times when individuals took advantage of our programs to harm innocent children," said Roger Mosby, the Boy Scouts' president and CEO. "While we know nothing can undo the tragic abuse that victims suffered, we believe the Chapter 11 process, with the proposed trust structure, will provide equitable compensation to all victims while maintaining the BSA's important mission."

The Boy Scouts are the latest major American institution to face a heavy price

over sexual abuse. Roman Catholic dioceses across the country and schools such as Penn State and Michigan State have paid out hundreds of millions of dollars in recent years.

The bankruptcy represents a painful turn for an organization that has been a pillar of American civic life for generations and a training ground for future leaders. Achieving the rank of Eagle Scout has long been a proud accomplishment that politicians, businessmen, astronauts and others put on their resumes and in their official biographies. "I'm sad for all the victims who were preyed upon by people entrusted with their care. I'm sad that no amount of money will undo their trauma," said Jackson Cooper, an Eagle Scout who is now a prosecutor in Louisville, Kentucky. "Whatever consequences come for BSA are no concern of mine. I only hope, if they continue to operate, they build robust systems to protect the young people in their care."

The Boy Scouts' finances have been strained in recent years by declining membership and sex-abuse settlements.

The number of youths taking part in scouting has dropped below 2 million, down from a peak of more than 4 million during the 1970s. Its membership rolls

took a big hit Jan. 1 when The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints cut ties and withdrew more than 400,000 scouts in favor of programs of its own.

The financial outlook worsened last year after New York, Arizona, New Jersey and California relaxed their statutes of limitations to make it easier for victims to file claims. Teams of lawyers across the U.S. have been signing up clients by the hundreds to sue the Boy Scouts.

Most of the new cases date to the 1960s, '70s and '80s, before the Boy Scouts adopted mandatory criminal background checks, abuse-prevention training for all staff and volunteers, and a rule that two or more adult leaders must be present during all activities. Many of the lawsuits accuse the group of negligence and cover-ups.

Wayne Perry, a member of the organization's national board and past president, said Scout families won't notice any differences as a result of the bankruptcy. He touted the protections now in place for young people. "Today, we are really, really good. Were we always good? No, nobody was good 50 years ago, 40 years ago, 30 years ago," Perry said. Amid the crush of lawsuits, the Scouts recently mortgaged some of their ma-

jer properties, including their national headquarters in Irving, Texas, and the 140,000-acre Philmont Ranch in New Mexico.

One unanswered question is whether the Boy Scouts' 261 local councils — and their campgrounds and other assets — will be dragged into the case, even though the Boy Scouts said the councils are legally separate entities and they were not part of the bankruptcy filing.

Mike Pfau, a Seattle-based attorney whose firm is representing scores of men nationwide, said the plaintiffs may go after the local councils' property holdings, too.

"We believe the real property held by the local councils may be worth significantly more than the Boy Scouts' assets," he said. He said one question will be whether the Boy Scouts transferred property to their local councils to try to put it out of the reach of those suing.

Perry said he hopes the court remembers that the Boy Scouts are teaching leadership and life skills to children. "You have to take into account the balancing of the victims, but (also) the fact that the kids today who are joining Scouting had nothing to do with those bad behaviors of criminal acts of perpetrators who are long gone," he said.

Plaintiffs' attorneys trace the Boy Scouts' fall to 2010, when a jury awarded a former Scout nearly \$20 million in a lawsuit in Portland, Oregon. The trial led the Oregon Supreme Court to release 20,000 pages of confidential Boy Scout files on 1,200 people after The Associated Press and other news organizations fought for their disclosure. Until last spring, the organization had insisted it never knowingly allowed a predator to work with youths. But in May, the AP reported that attorneys for abuse victims had identified multiple cases in which known predators were allowed to return to leadership posts. The next day, the Boy Scouts acknowledged the truth. □



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## Homeland Security waives contracting laws for border wall

By ELLIOT SPAGAT

**SAN DIEGO (AP)** — The Trump administration said Tuesday that it is waiving federal contracting laws to speed construction of a wall at the U.S.-Mexico border, moving the president closer to fulfilling a signature campaign promise in an election year but sparking criticism about potential for fraud, waste and abuse.

The Department of Homeland Security said waiving procurement regulations will allow 177 miles (283 kilometers) of wall to be built more quickly in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. The 10 waived laws include a requirement for open competition and giving losing bidders a chance to protest decisions.

The acting Homeland Security secretary, Chad Wolf, is exercising authority under a 2005 law that gives him sweeping powers to waive laws for building border barriers.

"We hope that will accelerate some of the construction that's going along the southwest border," Wolf told Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends."

Secretaries under President Donald Trump have issued 16 waivers, and President George W. Bush issued five, but Tuesday's announcement marks the first time that waivers have applied to federal procurement rules. Previously they were used to waive environmental impact reviews.

The Trump administration said the waivers will allow at least 94 miles (150 kilometers) of wall to be built this year, bringing the Republican leader closer to his goal of about 450 miles (720 kilometers) since he took office and made it one of his top domestic priorities. It said the other 83

miles (133 kilometers) covered by the waivers may get built this year.

"Under the president's leadership, we are building more wall, faster than ever before," the department said in a statement.

Critics say the waivers do away with key taxpayer safeguards. U.S. Rep. Bennie Thompson, a Mississippi Democrat who chairs the House Homeland Security Committee, said the president's "cronies are likely to be the beneficiaries."

Charles Tiefer, a professor at University of Baltimore School of Law who specializes in government contracts, said the government "can just pick the contractor you want and just ram it through ... The sky's the limit on what they bill."

Scott Amey, general counsel at the Project on Government Oversight, said waiving a law for contractors to provide the government with certified cost data — such as how much they pay for labor or parts — could lead to grossly inflated prices.

"It's equivalent to buying a car without seeing a sticker price," Amey said. "This could be a recipe for shoddy work and paying a much higher price than they should."

Administration officials say providing cost data can be onerous and difficult.

Congress gave the secretary power to waive laws in areas of high illegal activity in 2005 in legislation that included emergency spending for wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and minimum standards for state-issued identification cards.

The Senate approved it unanimously, with support from Joe Biden, Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. The House passed it with strong



In this Nov. 7, 2019 file photo, the first panels of levee border wall are seen at a construction site along the U.S.-Mexico border, in Donna, Texas.

Associated Press

bipartisan support; then-Rep. Bernie Sanders voted against it.

The waiver authority has survived legal challenges. In 2018, a federal judge in San Diego rejected arguments by California and environmental advocacy groups that the secretary's broad powers should have an expiration date. An appeals court upheld the ruling last year.

The waivers, to be published in the Federal Register, apply to projects that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will award in six Border Patrol sectors: San Diego and El Centro in California; Yuma and Tucson in Arizona; El Paso, which spans New Mexico and west Texas, and Del Rio, Texas.

The move came five days after Defense Secretary Mark Esper approved a \$3.8 billion request from Homeland Security to pay for walls in those same areas, and the Pentagon acknowledged that more cuts could be coming to

provide additional funding. The Pentagon's decision stripped money from major aircraft and procurement programs that touch Republican and Democratic districts and states.

The Defense Department transferred \$6.1 billion to

wall construction from its

counter-narcotics and

construction budgets after

Congress gave Trump only

a portion of what he wanted. The administration has been able to spend Pentagon money during legal challenges.

The administration said the waivers will apply to contractors that have already been vetted. In May, the Army Corps named 12 companies to compete for Pentagon-funded contracts. □

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## Trudeau urges patience, warns against force in rail protests

By ROB GILLIES  
Associated Press

**TORONTO (AP)** — Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau urged patience and warned against using force Tuesday as his government works to end nationwide rail blockades and protests over a British Columbia pipeline project. Demonstrators have set up blockades in British Columbia and Ontario in solidarity with opponents of the Coastal GasLink pipeline project that crosses the traditional territory of the Wet'suwet'en First Nation in northwestern British Columbia.

Hereditary chiefs in the Wet'suwet'en First Nation oppose the natural gas pipeline through their traditional territory, though it's received approval from elected band councils.

Since the Royal Canadian Mounted Police moved in to enforce an injunction and keep the hereditary chiefs and their supporters away from the pipeline work sites, protests by indigenous people and supporters have shut down the CN Rail network in eastern Canada and suspended most Via Rail passenger service. CN Rail transports goods worth 250 million Canadian dollars (\$188 million) annually across Canada.



Canada Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivers a statement in the House of Commons on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2020, regarding infrastructure disruptions caused by blockades across the country.

Associated Press

Trudeau said patience might be in short supply but said that makes it more valuable than ever. He said he's against politicians ordering police to arrest people.

"There are those who would have us act in haste, who want to boil this down to slogans, and ignore the complexities. Who think that using force is helpful. It is not," Trudeau said in Parliament.

Trudeau asked indigenous leaders to work with the government. He said he hoped the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs will agree to meet with Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Carolyn Bennett. Bennett said she's met with two of them but wants to meet with all of them as soon as possible.

Opposition Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer called Trudeau's statement

"a complete abdication of responsibility and a failure of leadership." Scheer said many of "radical activists" have little to no connection with First Nations communities. He previously said the activists should "check their privilege."

"For them this is just a warm-up act. A warm-up act for what they consider the next fight," he said. "In their end their objective is the entire shutdown of our en-

ergy industry."

He called the blockages illegal and said it's time the government stepped in. Trudeau later met with opposition leaders in Parliament to update them but excluded the Conservative Party leader, who Trudeau said disqualified himself with his "unacceptable" speech. Opposition New Democrat leader Jagmeet Singh called Scheer's speech racist.

Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde earlier said government and industry have to give the time and space to work with the Wet'suwet'en people. "We say we want to deescalate and we want dialogue," he said.

Via Rail said partial passenger rail service will resume Thursday to and from Ottawa and Quebec City, with a stop in Montreal. Almost all other Via trains remain cancelled.

Police also responded to the Victoria-area home of British Columbia Premier John Horgan on Tuesday when anti-pipeline protesters blocked his driveway. Members of the group Extinction Rebellion Vancouver Island said they would attempt a "citizen's arrest" to show support for Wet'suwet'en hereditary chiefs. □

## Carnival revelers poke fun at world leaders in Germany



A satiric carnival float depicting US President Donald Trump as horror clown Pennywise is pictured during a preview in a hall in Cologne, Germany, Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2020.

Associated Press

**MAINZ, Germany (AP)** — The heads and bodies are gigantic, the subjects are world leaders, and the

creations are irresistible to look at. All of these oversized figures are coming together for a provocative

parade at the traditional Mainz carnival celebrations in western Germany. They included a victorious British Prime Minister Boris Johnson with a grim looking Queen Elizabeth II standing behind him; a bare-chested Russian President Vladimir Putin holding a remote control to steer Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan atop a tank; and a triumphant U.S. President Donald Trump playing the harp like Roman Emperor Nero.

The Mainzer Carnival Association presented the colorful figures for a first glimpse Tuesday before they will entertain the crowds on top of floats next week in the traditional Shrove Monday street parade.

Mainz, Cologne and Dusseldorf, Germany's three big cities along the Rhine River, are all famous for their politically provocative floats. During Carnival,

dubbed the "fifth season of the year" before the start of Christian season of Lent, the common people are traditionally allowed to make fun of those in power.

The famous Carnival street parades, which travel for kilometers (miles) through the cities, will include not only the floats, but also dozens of brass bands, dancing groups and "Carnivalists" who throw tons of candy to revelers in the streets. □

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## Farmers block highways in Spain to protest low food prices

By ALICIA LEÓN

NAVALMORAL DE LA MATA,

Spain (AP) — Farmers in

fluorescent yellow vests blocked highways in southwestern Spain with tractors and other vehicles Tuesday in the latest mass protest over what they say are plummeting incomes for agricultural workers.

Several labor unions called for protest rallies, predominantly in the Extremadura region that borders Portugal, to demand government action to ensure more realistic retail prices for fruit and vegetables.

Ángel García, head of the regional young farmers association Asaja, said about 700 tractors blocked the roads and all farm workers in Extremadura were urged to strike.

At a different protest location on the other side of Spain, police tried to prevent farm workers blocking both sides of the A7 highway near the southeastern town of El Ejido. Farmers also dumped crates of cucumbers and tomatoes onto roads and started small fires.

Protests against high production costs and low prices for farm produce almost daily have posed a chal-

lenge for Spain's month-old coalition government as the European Union plans to cut agricultural subsidies and the United States threatens to impose tariffs. Both trade unions and the government also blame major supermarket chains for slashing prices on fruit and vegetables and forcing farmers to sell their goods for less.

Jorge García Luna, who grows almonds and olives, says that when big grocery chains work to maximize their profits, the farmer becomes "the weakest link in the chain."

"We are in a situation that you can't afford to abandon farming but you can't afford to keep going," García Luna said ahead of the protest.

Industry officials say overall farm income dropped by 9% in 2019, the Spanish daily El País reported.

Tobacco cooperative manager Jose María Ramos says with export losses expected from Britain's departure from the EU and a proposed 14% cut in EU farm subsidies, farmers have no choice but to protest.

"This is going to make it even more difficult to con-

tinue with the cultivation of tobacco," said Ramos. "People just can't go on, they go into the streets and show their anger."

Officials from Spain's main agricultural organizations met with members of three political parties in parliament on Tuesday and were to have more talks later with the Labor Ministry. The unions met with the government last week but continued their protests as no farm support agreement was reached.

Government spokeswoman María Jesús Montero



Farmers protest blocking the motorway near Navalmoral de la Mata in Cáceres province, Spain, on Tuesday, February 18, 2020.

Associated Press

said Tuesday that the government understood the farmers' plight. She said it planned to modify a food

law that covers production and distribution to ensure agricultural workers get a fairer deal. □

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## Russia and Turkey agree on more talks on Syria amid crisis

By SUZAN FRASER and JAMEY KEATEN

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) —

Talks between Russia and Turkey meant to reduce tensions in northwestern Syria did not yield a "satisfactory result" for Ankara, but both sides agreed to continue negotiations, a spokesman for Turkey's president said Tuesday.

Turkey and Russia support rival groups in the Syrian conflict and for the past few years have been closely coordinating their moves in Idlib province. A truce reached between the two countries collapsed in late 2019, leading to an offensive by Russian-backed Syrian troops who captured wide areas in the last rebel stronghold and triggered one of the civil war's worst humanitarian crises with about 900,000 people fleeing their homes.

A Turkish delegation ended two days of talks with Russian officials in Moscow, and Ibrahim Kalin, the spokesman for Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said both sides agreed to meet again.

"We did not accept the document and map that was presented to us," Kalin said, adding that Turkey's position was for a return to the lines laid out under a cease-fire agreement for Idlib in 2018.

Briefing journalists after a Cabinet meeting, Kalin also said it was out of the question for Turkey to move the positions of its observation posts.

Turkey will continue sending reinforcements "to protect the region and civilians," Kalin said, adding that Ankara would respond to any attack against its troops "in the strongest way, like we did in the past weeks."

The Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement that "both sides noted their adherence to the existing agreements that envisage measures to reduce tensions, ease the humanitarian situation and continue the fight against terrorism." The end of the talks came hours after the U.N. human



Civilians flee from Idlib toward the north to find safety inside Syria near the border with Turkey, Saturday, Feb. 15, 2020.

Associated Press

rights chief urged Syrian government forces and their allies to allow safe corridors in conflict areas in northwestern Syria, where a military offensive has unleashed a massive wave of fleeing civilians in one of the worst humanitarian catastrophes in the long civil war.

Michelle Bachelet told reporters in Geneva it was "cruel beyond belief" that civilians live under plastic sheeting in freezing conditions while getting bombed.

Her appeal came after a day after Syrian President Bashar Assad pledged to press ahead with a military campaign in the northwest that has displaced many people from their homes since the start of December, according to U.N. of-

ficials.

Many of the civilians are sleeping in open fields and under trees in freezing temperatures.

"Children and families are caught between the violence, the biting cold, the lack of food and the desperate living conditions. Such abject disregard for the safety and well-being of children and families is beyond the pale and must not go on," said Henrietta Ford, executive director of the U.N.'s children agency. About half the region's population had already fled other parts of Syria, and displacement refugee camps are full. Aid organizations, including the U.N. World Food Program, have been forced to stop food distribution temporarily because the fighting has dis-

rupted the movement of trucks bringing supplies to the region.

Backed by Russian air power, Syrian government troops have made swift advances, seizing dozens of towns and villages in Idlib province and nearby rural areas around Aleppo.

In the past week, Assad's forces have secured a strategic highway known as the M5 and consolidated control over Aleppo province for the first time since 2012, dealing a severe blow to the opposition now fighting to hold its last bastion in Idlib.

Turkey has restarted joint patrols with the Russian military in northeastern Syria after a two-week hiatus due to the escalation in Idlib, the Russian military said. The government's rapid ad-

vances have sparked rare clashes between Syria and Turkey, which backs Syria's rebels and has troops in the region to monitor a 2018 cease-fire deal. Turkey's president has warned Assad to halt the advance and sent thousands of troops and equipment into the opposition enclave to try to stall the Syrian government offensive.

Already home to more than 3.5 million Syrian refugees, Turkey fears a new influx of people may overwhelm its borders which it has kept sealed in recent years.

The resumption of joint patrols in Hassakeh, in eastern Syria, was a possible sign of easing tensions.

The U.N. Human Rights Office said it recorded 298 civilian deaths in Idlib and Aleppo, where the government offensive has been concentrated, since Jan. 1. It said 93 percent of those deaths were caused by the Syrian government and its allies. In addition, 10 medical facilities and 19 educational facilities were either directly hit or affected by nearby strikes, the U.N. office said.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres decried suffering of Syrians as "horrible" in the 9-year-old civil war.

In an interview with The Associated Press in Lahore, Pakistan, Guterres called for an immediate cease-fire, urging Turkey, Russia and Iran to find a political solution.

Bachelet also urged all parties begin an immediate cease-fire and ensure the protection of all civilians. She called on the Syrian government and its allies to allow humanitarian corridors in conflict areas to permit the safe passage of civilians.

"No shelter is now safe," Bachelet said. "And as the government offensive continues and people are forced into smaller and smaller pockets, I fear even more people will be killed." Syrian opposition activists, meanwhile, reported airstrikes on several rebel-held areas Tuesday, including the outskirts of the town of Atareb and Daret Azzeh. □

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People offer funeral prayers for a victim of a toxic gas leak, during his funeral prayer, in Karachi, Pakistan, Monday, Feb. 17, 2020.

Associated Press

## Death toll from toxic gas leak rises to 14 in Pakistan

**KARACHI, Pakistan (AP)** — A gas leak in the southern port city of Karachi has killed 14 people and sickened hundreds more, Pakistani health officials said Tuesday.

The leak that started Sunday has set off a panic in Karachi and raised concerns because city officials could not immediately identify the source and type of gas involved. Officials said there was no suspicion of sabotage.

The apparently odorless gas, which causes severe breathing problems, has sickened hundreds since striking Karachi's coastal neighborhood of Kamari and residents began rushing to local hospitals.

Zafar Mahdi, a senior health official, put the death toll at 14 on Tuesday.

Authorities said they were planning to evacuate resi-

dents from Kamari to safer places by Tuesday evening. Scientists and chemical experts from the army and navy were deployed to the affected area to try to detect the source of the leak.

Syed Murad Ali Shah, chief minister in Sindh province, acknowledged that authorities were still unable to determine what caused the gas leak, which he said had not spread to other parts of the city.

Hundreds of residents rallied Tuesday demanding the source of the leak be traced quickly.

All of the stricken people — hospitals said they had treated more than 650 — were residents of Kamari.

A patient in a Karchi hospital, Babar Bahadur, said Monday he first felt an ache in his eyes and pain in chest. □



In this photo taken Tuesday, Feb. 4, 2020, a young desert locust that has not yet grown wings is stuck in a spider's web on a thorny bush in the desert near Garowe, in the semi-autonomous Puntland region of Somalia.

Associated Press

## Huge locust outbreak in East Africa reaches South Sudan

By MAURA AJAK  
Associated Press

**JUBA, South Sudan (AP)** — The worst locust outbreak that parts of East Africa have seen in 70 years has reached South Sudan, a country where roughly half the population already faces hunger after years of civil war, officials announced Tuesday.

Around 2,000 locusts were spotted inside the country, Agriculture Minister Onyoti Adigo told reporters. Authorities will try to control the outbreak, he added.

The locusts have been seen in Eastern Equatoria state near the borders with Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. All have been affected by the outbreak that has been in-

fluenced by the changing climate in the region.

The situation in those three countries "remains extremely alarming," the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization said in its latest Locust Watch update Monday. Locusts also have reached Sudan, Eritrea, Tanzania and more recently Uganda.

The soil in South Sudan's Eastern Equatoria has a sandy nature that allows the locusts to lay eggs easily, said Meshack Malo, country representative with the FAO.

At this stage "if we are not able to deal with them ... it will be a problem," he said. South Sudan is even less prepared than other coun-

tries in the region for a locust outbreak, and its people are arguably more vulnerable. More than 5 million people are severely food insecure, the U.N. humanitarian office says in its latest assessment, and some 860,000 children are malnourished.

Five years of civil war shattered South Sudan's economy, and lingering insecurity since a 2018 peace deal continues to endanger humanitarians trying to distribute aid.

Another local aid worker was shot and killed last week, the U.N. said Tuesday.

The locusts have traveled across the region in swarms the size of major cities. □

# Brazil oil workers clash with Petrobras in 18-day strike

By DIANE JEANTET

Associated Press

**RIO DE JANEIRO (AP)**—Brazilian oil workers and oil giant Petrobras are locked in a power struggle over plans to shift focus away from non-core assets, with a federation of unions saying on Tuesday that thousands of employees are on strike indefinitely.

Roughly one thousand people gathered outside the headquarters of state-controlled Petrobras in Rio de Janeiro, waving flags and protesting against recent layoffs at a fertilizer factory in the state of Paraná.

"This will have an impact economically, in taxes, all sectors," Oséias da Costa a 35-year-old worker from the facility, known as Fafen, said in an interview. "This is a strike demanding the rights of Fafen workers and all the nation's oil workers, because of all the problems in Petrobras' administrative area."

Leftist political groups, including the Workers' Party, have also expressed their support for the strike, and their opposition to plans for privatization of company



Oil workers march against layoffs at the state oil company Petrobras, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2020.

Associated Press

assets.

President Jair Bolsonaro appointed Roberto Castello Branco, a pro-market reformer, as Petrobras' chief executive, who with Economy Minister Paulo Guedes has advocated in favor of selling the firm's non-core assets. Petrobras says the fertilizer facility has been losing money and that shutting it is a business

decision, while oil workers have seized on the plan as a harbinger of coming hardship from the company prioritizing more profitable activities related to oil production.

The Unified Federation of Oil Workers said 21,000 employees in 13 states have joined the strike since it kicked off on Feb. 1 — about 60 percent of

the company's workforce. The Fafen facility employs about 1,000 people.

Petrobras, contacted by The Associated Press, did not confirm those numbers. The company has been able to maintain oil and gas production levels and meet fuel demand across the country by bringing in temporary workers on emergency contracts that

often involve longer shifts. The federation says 36 of Petrobras' 39 offshore platforms in the Rio de Janeiro region, as well as several refineries across the country, are now run by such contingency teams.

The movement suffered a blow Monday night, when Justice Ives Gandra of Brazil's Superior Labor Court ruled that the strike was illegal and ordered fines equivalent to \$115,000 a day if it continues.

The federation, which is comprised of 13 unions, said it will appeal the decision.

A similar ruling last year by Justice Gandra was overruled by other members of the court, the federation said in a statement Tuesday, calling for the extension of the 18-day strike.

Earlier this month, Gandra argued that the strike had turned "abusive" because unions did not comply with an order to guarantee that at least 90 percent of the workforce would resume their activities. As a result, Gandra authorized Petrobras to contract emergency workers and avoid drops in production. □



In this Feb. 12, 2020 photo, a police officer directs motorcycles to speed up during a protest against the dire security situation in Port-au-Prince, Haiti.

Associated Press

By DANICA COTO  
Associated Press

**SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)**

— The United Nations issued a scathing report on Tuesday that accused Haitian police of not protecting an impoverished neighborhood from corrupt officers and gang leaders they say shot at people and set fire to homes and cars in a re-

cent three-day attack.

The report urged local authorities to prosecute those responsible for the violence that erupted in November in the Bel Air neighborhood, a largely pro-opposition community in the capital of Port-au-Prince known for organizing anti-government protests.

"Far from being an isolated

## U.N. report questions police, highlights violence in Haiti

incident, the Bel Air attack illustrates the recent evolution of the current context in Haiti, mainly characterized by the general insecurity in working-class neighborhoods and slums, the impunity of members of criminal gangs...the alleged collusion between them and certain political and economic actors, the links between gang members and certain agents of the Haitian National Police, as well as the lack of police intervention," the report stated.

The investigation cited sources alleging that a government representative offered about \$50,000 to organizations if they convinced certain people in Bel Air to lift barricades

set up by anti-government protesters in a key area that prevented access to major markets. Days after the alleged meeting occurred, the report said that a former policeman, Jimmy Cherizier, known as "Barbecue," and other alleged gang leaders repeated the request to have the barricades lifted.

The community refused, and on Nov. 4, dozens of armed men opened fire in the area and burned homes and cars as part of a three-day rampage. At least three people were killed and six injured, although the U.N. said it believes the number could be higher.

Cherizier told The Associated Press on Tuesday by

phone that he is innocent and that a proper investigation had not been launched. While no arrest warrants have been issued in the Bel Air incidents, Cherizier is wanted in other fatal attacks, including one in the nearby slum of La Saline in which up to 59 men, women and children were killed in November 2018.

"More than a year after the fact, the lack of progress is particularly worrying and the involvement of Jimmy Cherizier ... in other similar acts demonstrates the direct impact of impunity on the recurrence of violence," said the report issued by the UN Human Rights Office and the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti. □

## LOCAL



## Harbour House Aruba: The unique dimension of urban-beach



**ORANJESTAD** — Take a look at this cool site reflecting best of two worlds: beach and city. Harbour House Aruba offers cosmopolitan living in a beach-chic environment. The residence is fast-selling their studios, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units for many reasons but in a nutshell we can name: great location, great value for your money and great quality. Let's show you more.

We have 94 units in the former 7-level Marazul building at the historical location of Paardenbaai. Harbour House Aruba is the ultimate smart investment or personal living space. Marinelda Cartaya, Sales Manager, couldn't be happier about the sales process. "We sold 70 % already which is exciting. Both visitors and locals love this unique concept." She explains that the construction development is at a rapid pace which is great because buyers can see the lay out, materials and progress. "Improvement is visible. The pool is constructed and every floor is in a different phase. The stairs to the Jacuzzi's at the top floor are ready and in terms of the indoor finishes, we can display tiling, windows, sliding glass floors." Only two studios, some two bedroom units and three bedroom units are still available and the sales office has visitors on a daily basis. City elegance combined with tropical tranquility is what you get here. The panoramas are breath-taking. Can you imagine yourself with your favorite cup of joe, gazing out over the ocean while the city of Oranjestad is awakening?



For those waiting to see the progress of the project, just check out the website. It will show you updates on construction including images. Marinelda: "When you live abroad stopping by to check upon your purchase is not that simple, yet with the monthly updates on our website, it is a lot easier. When in Aruba or intending to visit, contact us, schedule an appointment and you can personally see on site what we are offering." The ground level of the building will provide a gallery of restaurants, art gallery, stores, and supermarket. A parking lot will be assigned to the owners and visitors. "If we continue like this, the intended deadline of June 2020 will be achieved," says Marinelda.

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## Sea turtle conservation by Turtugaruba Foundation

ORANJESTAD — Turtugaruba was founded on September 3rd, 2003 by a group of enthusiastic volunteers. Ten years earlier, in 1993, a Sea Turtle Recovery Action Plan (STRAP) was introduced in Aruba and the rest of the Caribbean as an initiative of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Tom Barmes, who was working at DLVV (Department of Agriculture, Husbandry and Fishery) was one of the writers of the STRAP for Aruba, together with Karen Eckert, director of WIDECAST (Wider Caribbean Sea Turtle Conservation Network). This is how sea turtle conservation started on the island following a plan that is still complied with today.

Tom formed a group of volunteers around him, because nature does not know office hours, like an organization such as DLVV. This group of volunteers used the name Widecast Aruba and today there are still a few of them active. They first started protecting the Leatherback Sea Turtle nests on Palm Beach and Eagle Beach. This group also investigated which other species of sea turtles use Aruba as their nesting habitat and which beaches are used by them. For a period of 25 years a study has been conducted in which every early morning the beach was being monitored in which now there is a good overview of sea turtle nesting activities.

There are 4 different sea turtle species that visit Aruba to lay their eggs, each with their own specific season:

- Leatherback Sea Turtle - Lederschildpad - Driekiel (March – September)
- Loggerhead Sea Turtle - Dikkopschildpad - Cawama (May – September)
- Hawksbill Sea Turtle - Karetschildpad - Caret (June – December)
- Green Turtle - Soepschildpad - Turtuga Blanco (July-November)

Sea turtles play a vital role in keeping our oceans healthy. The Green Turtle, for example, keeps the sea grasses on the bottom of the sea short and therefore a healthy place for many fish to deposit their eggs. The Leatherback, the largest turtle of the world, eats mainly jellyfish and helps maintain the balance between jellyfish and plankton. Despite the threats that exist on Aruba, the turtles still keep coming.

Turtugaruba Foundation reported that the first Hawksbill Sea Turtles have hatched. The nest was laid November 2019, resulting in an early hatching for 2020. Therefore it is of great importance to keep our beaches clean throughout the year in order to help provide sea turtles with a clean nesting environment.



### What you can do to protect the sea turtles

- Lights out for sea turtles.
- Do not drive on beaches.
- Do not litter. Do not leave any plastic cups, straws or bags on the beach.
- Remove obstacles from the beach.
- Do not disturb a nesting sea turtle.
- Do not attempt to touch the turtle but stay at a respectful distance (at least 10 meters).
- Do not take a turtle out of the water
- Do not feed the turtles
- Do call Turtugaruba (24 hour Turtle Hotline: (297) 592-9393).

For more information visit the facebook page Turtugaruba Foundation. □



## Four loyal visitors honored

EAGLE BEACH — Kimberley Richardson of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure to honor Aruba's loyal and friendly visitors as Distinguished Visitors of Aruba and Goodwill Ambassadors of Aruba. The Distinguished visitor certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 10 years and more consecutively. The Goodwill Ambassador certificate is presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism, as a token of appreciation to the guests who visit Aruba 20 years and more consecutively.

Douglas Belanger received the honorary certificate 'Distinguished Visitor of Aruba'. The Goodwill Ambassador certificate went to three people! Cynthia Graham-



Belanger and couple Robert and Cathy Preston, all from USA.

These lovely people stated that they love the island very much, especially for its year-round sunny weather, nice sandy beaches and picturesque sunsets, delicious

variety of foods, its safety, and Aruba's warm and friendly people who have become like family to them.

Richardson together with the representatives of the Divi Tamarind All

Inclusive Resort presented the certificates to the honorees, handed over some presents and also thanked them for choosing Aruba as their favorite vacation destination and as their home-away-from-home. □

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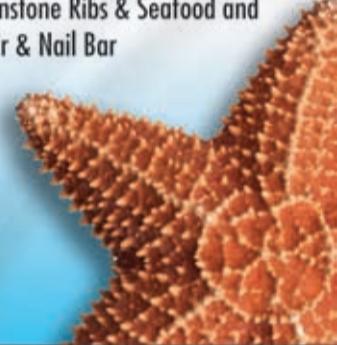
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## 10 Simple tips investing in your well-being

By Bonnie Gortler

**NEW YORK, USA —** Life is too short to feel stressed, irritated. The responsibilities and fast pace you have each day can be challenging to juggle. When you allow yourself to take time off from your busy schedule for a vacation with your family or friends, you begin to clear your thoughts. Think of this time as an investment in your well-being.

Let go of the struggles you may have been experiencing so you can feel rejuvenated and refreshed. Your time away will clear your mind and do wonders in boosting your creativity and problem-solving abilities. This may take a little time; however, those neg-

ative thoughts that were front and center will float away. Shift away from focusing on what is frustrating you, to finding a solution to what your concern is.

Years ago, it was a struggle for me to leave and unplug on vacation. When I did take time off, I would bring work and not fully relax. What I discovered was that I was missing out on enjoying all the beauty around me at the moment. I had anxiety surrounding the idea that I had to be engaged in work or was going to miss something. Eventually, I learned it was up to me to make necessary changes that would allow me to enjoy the time while being off and not at work.

To ease concerns, I took a

proactive approach and planned to streamline a portion of my processes before going away. It was this shift in thinking that finally allowed me to leave with my mind at ease, knowing everything would work out because I pre-planned, and created a solid plan before leaving for vacation. What a valuable lesson in letting go. Now when I go on vacation, I fully enjoy my time away with my family and friends.

Are you relaxing now while you are away or going through the motions? Don't waste those precious moments. You will soon be back to your normal routine. When you return home, begin to invest in your well-being daily by using the simple tips below.



### 10 Simple Tips Investing in Your Well-Being

1. Start your day with a positive attitude, and be grateful for what you have now.
2. Establish a daily routine that gives you pleasure. Do what you love.
3. Don't beat yourself up if you stray from your plan for a day. The following day starts again.
4. Choose to be gentle with yourself and do things in moderation.
5. Do something you have never done before. If you feel fear, do it anyway.
6. Read a book for the fun of it.
7. Take a walk outside in nature.
8. Be mindful of what foods you are eating.
9. Help others. Sharing is caring.
10. Stop worrying about what other people think of you and start trusting yourself.

Whether on vacation or in life, it's good to relax, unwind, and take time for you. Don't spend your days worried, stressed, and frustrated. Every day, you have choices to make. Decide now to make your well-being a top priority. Enjoy today doing the things you love instead of thinking about what might happen next. Take one action step today so you can feel refreshed, relaxed, and rejuvenated. It's your time to have fun and enjoy life right now. □

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### About Bonnie Gortler:

Bonnie Gortler, the Wealth & Well-Being Coach, is a successful stock market expert who has been instrumental in managing multi-million-dollar client portfolios within a top-rated investment firm during her over 35-year corporate career. As the author of "Journey to Wealth", Bonnie has made it her mission to share the importance of risk management and how to enjoy true financial well-being by applying the technical and mental sides of investing. Bonnie has an M.B.A. in Business Administration and is a certified life coach. Visit [BonnieGortler.com](http://BonnieGortler.com) to learn more about investing, well-being, and personal development.

## Today's Happening



## A weekly calendar with a selection of what's going on in Aruba

**Wednesday 19****Live flamenco music and fab food**

- Tonight at hip Bohemian restaurant: Catchy Rumba Gitana and dramatic Spanish ballads combine with the passionately prepared dishes to tickle your taste buds to the max.
- From 7pm
- Bohemian restaurant, in front of Barcelo Resort at Palm Beach
- Facebook: Bohemian

**Sunday 23****Aruba's 66th Grand Parade 2020**

- It's a carnival celebration. Join the last parade of 2020 to celebrate 66 years of Carnival in Aruba. An explosion of colors, creativity, music and great ambience.
- 11am-6pm
- Starts at Aruba Entertainment Center in Dakota
- Facebook: SMAC

**Thursday 20****Lighting Parade in San Nicolas**

- If you missed it last week here's your chance to enjoy it, but this time in our chocolate city, San Nicolas. The city will be light up with creativity, costumes, floats and road pieces.
- From 8pm-1am
- Starts at Joe Laveist Sportpark
- Facebook: SMAC

**Friday 21****Asian Fan Mosaic Workshop**

- After the geisha and the samurai, we have in February the Asian Fan mosaic workshop. Claudia and Cosecha have a whole line of Asia inspired pieces prepared for you in 2020. It is more than logical that also the Asian Fan, a truly craftsmanship and fashion statement piece, forms part of this line. Note: all instructions and materials regarding the grouting will be given to you, so you can do this at home.
- From 5:00pm-7:30pm
- Cosecha San Nicolaas, B v/d Veen Zeppenfeldstraat 20
- Facebook: Aruba Cosecha

**Monday 24****Brunchin' at the Beach**

- Join us at Fresco on the beach for a special brunch buffet where you can savor endless lunch and breakfast classics, breathtaking views of the Caribbean and tall glasses of crisp champagne. This 'Flutes and Flavor' Brunch on the beach is just \$35 per person including taxes, excluding 15% service charge. For more information or reservation, please contact our Navigators at 5236115..
- 12pm-2pm
- Renaissance Ocean Suites
- Facebook: Renaissance Aruba Resort & Casino

**Saturday 22****Carnival Grand Parade in San Nicolas**

- It's almost the end of Carnival season and San Nicolas is ready to welcome all their Carnival people for the Grand Parade. Come enjoy the music and the fun at the Sunrise City.
- From 12pm-6pm
- Starts at Joe Laveist Sportpark
- Facebook: SMAC

**Tuesday 25****Taco Tuesday's**

- Every Tuesday Lola is slinging crazy specials your way! Try this week's Carnita special
- 5pm-1am
- Next to Craft bar at Palm Beach
- Facebook: Lola Taqueria

## SPORTS



## NCAA moves toward immediate eligibility for all transfers

By RALPH D. RUSSO

The NCAA took a significant step toward allowing all Division I athletes to transfer one time without sitting out a season of competition.

A plan to change the waiver process is expected to be presented to the Division I Council in April. If adopted, new criteria would go into effect for the 2020-21 academic year and be a boon for athletes in high-profile sports such as football and men's and women's basketball.

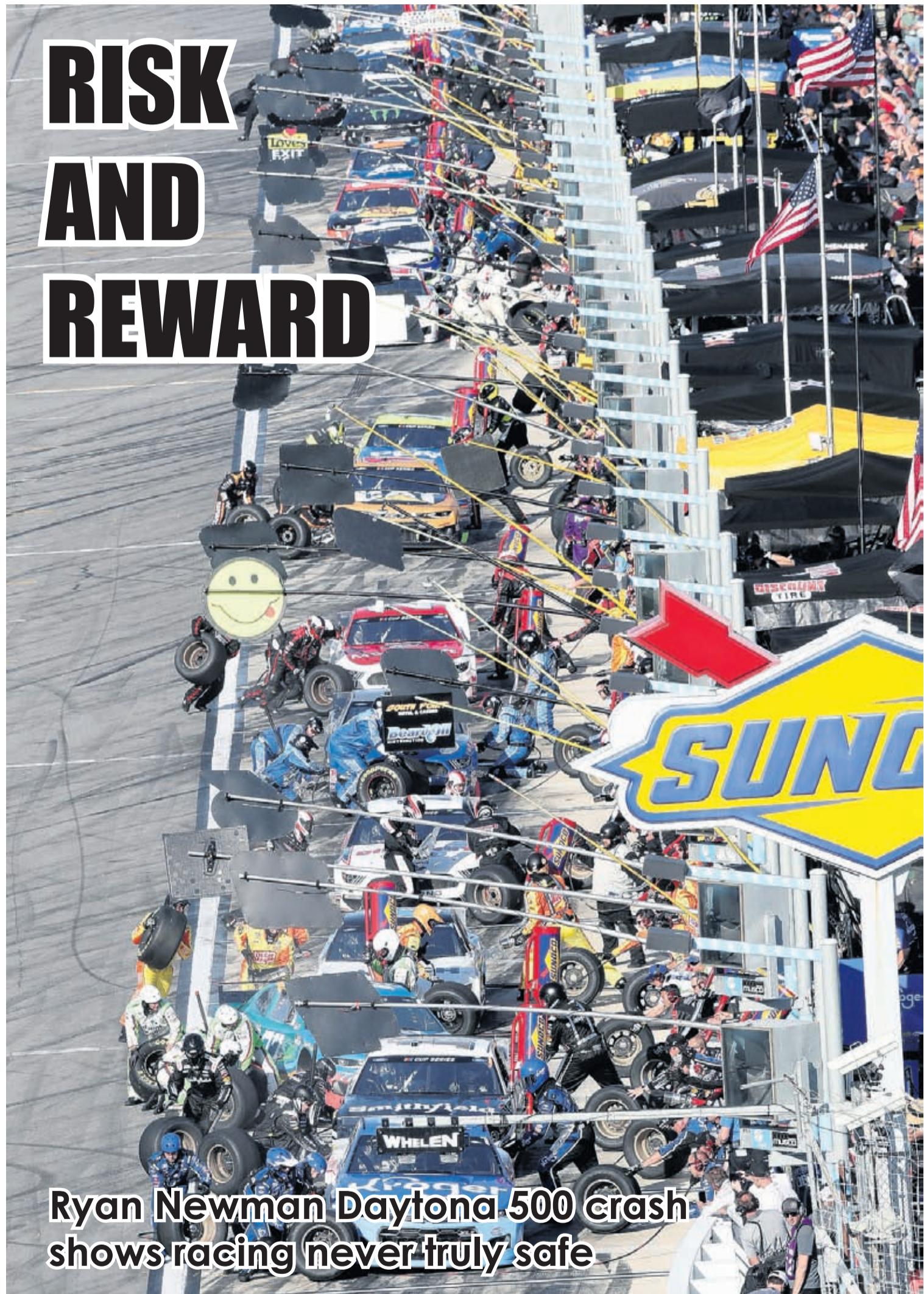
In those sports, along with baseball and men's hockey, Division I undergraduate athletes are required to do what the NCAA calls a year-in-residence after transferring, when they can practice with their new teams but not participate in games.

Other NCAA Division I athletes are permitted by rule a one-time exception to be immediately eligible for competition after transferring.

The NCAA's announcement Tuesday comes a day after the Atlantic Coast Conference became the second Power Five conference to publicly support the one-time exception for all transferring athletes. Last month CBS Sports reported that Big Ten athletic directors backed a legislative proposal that would allow all athletes to transfer one time and be immediately eligible to play.

**Continued on page 23**

# RISK AND REWARD



Ricky Stenhouse Jr., front, and the rest of the field come in for a pit stop during the NASCAR Daytona 500 auto race at Daytona International Speedway, Monday, Feb. 17, 2020, in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Associated Press  
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## Lightning top Avs in OT for franchise-best 11th straight win

By The Associated Press

**DENVER (AP)** — Nikita Kucherov stole the puck from Nathan MacKinnon and scored 3:03 into overtime, sending the Tampa Bay Lightning to a franchise-record 11th straight win, 4-3 over the Colorado Avalanche on Monday night. Cameron Gaunce and Alex Killorn scored 16 seconds apart during the Bolts' three-goal second period before Colorado came back to force overtime. Steven Stamkos also had a goal for Tampa Bay in the second period that erased a 1-0 deficit, and Bolts goaltender Curtis McElhinney stopped 24 shots despite getting bowled over by Colorado's J.T. Compher midway through the third period, sparking the first of two brawls in a tense ending.

McElhinney crumpled awkwardly and lay motionless for a moment before rising slowly. He was visited by a trainer but stayed in the game. Compher was called for interference.

Another scuffle broke out after Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon leveled Ondrej Palat cleanly in front of Tampa Bay's bench.

The Avalanche dropped their third straight and lost forward Mikko Rantanen to a left shoulder injury when he was tripped into the boards at full-speed by Erik Cernak in the second period. Rantanen immediately left the ice and headed inside before the Bolts killed the power play.

**GOLDEN KNIGHTS 3, CAPITALS 2**  
LAS VEGAS (AP) — Max Pa-



Colorado Avalanche goaltender Pavel Francouz reacts after the puck slips by for a goal for Tampa Bay Lightning left wing Alex Killorn in the second period of an NHL hockey game Monday, Feb. 17, 2020, in Denver.

cioletti scored his team-high 27th goal and Vegas beat Washington.

Nick Holden and Reilly Smith also scored for the Golden Knights, and Marc-Andre Fleury made 24 saves.

Alex Ovechkin remained stuck on 698 career goals after being held without a point for the fifth consecutive game, his longest drought of the season.

It was Vegas' third-straight victory, and it improved to 7-3-2 since coach Pete DeBoer took over for Gerard Gallant, who was fired on Jan. 15.

T.J. Oshie scored both goals for Washington in the third period. Braden Holtby made 26 saves.

### FLAMES 6, DUCKS 4

**CALGARY, Alberta (AP)** — Andrew Mangiapane had three goals and an assist, and Calgary rallied past Anaheim.

Matthew Tkachuk had a goal and an assist for Calgary, which trailed 3-1 early in the third period. Sam Bennett and Sean Monahan also scored. Cam Talbot made 26 stops for Calgary. Adam Henrique, Jakob Silfverberg, Nicolas Deslauri-

ers and Devin Shore scored for Anaheim. Ryan Miller made 37 saves.

### PANTHERS 5, SHARKS 3

**SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP)** — Evgenii Dadonov and Mike Hoffman scored, Aaron Ekblad had two assists and slumping Florida beat San Jose.

Colton Sceviour, Anton Stralman and Vincent Trocheck also scored for Florida, which had lost six of seven. Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 29 shots, and the Panthers moved within two points of idle Toronto for third place in the Atlantic

Division.

Dylan Gambrell, Kevin Labanc and Timo Meier each scored and Brent Burns had two assists for San Jose, which had won four of its previous five. Aaron Dell had 23 saves.

### COYOTES 2, ISLANDERS 1

**GLendale, Ariz. (AP)** — Antti Raanta stopped 25 shots, Conor Garland scored his team-leading 20th goal and Arizona beat New York.

Raanta was sharp for the second straight game after a shaky performance against Ottawa. Clayton Keller scored his first goal in nine games in the first period, and Garland became Arizona's first 20-goal scorer of the season with a one-timer in the third.

New York failed on numerous good chances against the Coyotes before Anthony Beauvillier scored the Islanders' first goal in 166 minutes in the third period. Semyon Varlamov stopped 30 shots. □

Associated Press

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## Newman awake, speaking after horrific Daytona 500 crash

**DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. (AP)**

— NASCAR driver Ryan Newman is awake and speaking with family and doctors a day after his horrific crash on the final lap of the Daytona 500.

Roush Fenway Racing released an update on its driver Tuesday, about 20 hours after Newman's car slammed into the wall at nearly 200 mph, flipped, got T-boned by another car, flipped several more times and skidded to a halt in flames.

Everyone watching feared the worst Monday night and had to wait nearly two hours to learn that Newman's injuries were not considered life-threatening. The latest update was more good news for the 42-year driver and 2008 Daytona 500 champion.

Newman turned hard into the wall after getting bumped from behind by Ryan Blaney a few hundred



Ryan Newman (6) goes airborne as Corey LaJoie (32) crashes in to him on the final lap of the NASCAR Daytona 500 auto race at Daytona International Speedway, Monday, Feb. 17, 2020, in Daytona Beach, Fla. Sunday's race was postponed because of rain.

Associated Press

feet from the finish line. Newman's No. 6 Ford then flipped onto its roof, where he was helpless as he was

walloped in the driver's side by another car at 190 mph. Newman's car continued to skid upside down along

the speedway and crossed the finish line in flames as safety crews hurried to snuff out the fire and cut New-

man loose. It took about 8 minutes for workers to roll his car rightside-up, and medical personnel used black screens to block spectator views as Newman was placed in a waiting ambulance and taken to Halifax Medical Center.

A sense of relief spread across Daytona International Speedway. There has not been a fatality in NASCAR's elite Cup Series since Dale Earnhardt died in a crash on the final lap of the 2001 Daytona 500.

Nineteen years later, it's clear that Earnhardt's death probably saved Newman's life. NASCAR spent the last two decades working to improve safety regulations by installing energy-absorbing walls around tracks, mandating the use of head-and-neck restraints attached to helmets and continuing to make improvements to the cars. □

## Yankees' Judge says Astros should be stripped of 2017 title



New York Yankees' Aaron Judge runs on the field during a spring training baseball workout Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2020, in Tampa, Fla.

Associated Press

**TAMPA, Fla. (AP)** — New York Yankees star Aaron Judge feels the Houston Astros should be stripped of their 2017 World Series championship.

"You cheated and you didn't earn it," Judge said Tuesday after the Yankees' first full-squad workout. "That's how I feel. It wasn't earned. It wasn't earned the way of playing the game right and fighting to the end and knowing that we're competing, we're competitors. The biggest thing about competition is

laying it all out on the line, and whoever is the better player, better person comes out on top. To know that another team had an advantage that, nothing you can really guard against, I just don't feel like that's earned."

Major League Baseball concluded the Astros used a video camera to steal catcher's signs in 2017, including during the post-season, and in 2018. Manager AJ Hinch and general manager Jeff Luhnow were suspended for one

season each, then were fired by the team. Houston was fined \$5 million and stripped of its next two first- and second-round draft picks.

"It affected a lot of games, no matter what anybody says," Judge said. "It affected the game big time. People lost jobs, people lost money, people lost a lot of things important to them." No players were punished by MLB.

"I wasn't a fan of the punishment, I thought that was a little weak for a player-driven scheme," Judge said, "that no players involved got any punishments."

Houston beat the Yankees in a seven-game AL Championship Series in 2017, winning all four home games, and defeated the Los Angeles Dodgers in a seven-game World Series.

"To hear that you got cheated out of that opportunity, that's tough to kind of let go," Judge said.

Judge finished second to the Astros' José Altuve in that year's voting for AL MVP.

Judge backed the position

of Chicago Cubs pitcher Yu Darvish, who felt the penalties imposed by baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred were insufficient.

"I think Darvish was the one that said, if you're playing in the Olympics and win a gold medal and find that you cheated, you don't get to keep that medal," Judge said.

He agreed with teammate Gleyber Torres, who said Monday that he thought the Astros also broke rules in 2019 when the Yankees lost the AL Championship Series in six games.

"To think that they cheated and won it all in '17, to think that they just clear-cut stopped '19 or '18, it's tough for me to say that," Judge said. But we'll never really now, to be honest."

Manfred said Sunday he wasn't 100% sure the Astros didn't violate rules in 2019 but it was his best judgment that they didn't.

Judge said the whole Yankees team is "driven" this year after the Astros scandal and falling just short of a pennant twice in three years.

"There's a different level of focus," Judge said. "These boys are ready. We got to go out there and finish it this year."

The sign stealing will remain on Judge's mind.

"It's always going to be in the back of your head a little bit," Judge said. "You're always going to have that bad taste in your mouth, thinking about it and hearing about it, but at some point we're going to move on and we're going to move forward and continue growing this game. That's what I care about is growing this game."

Judge did not hit or throw because of what the team said was a minor right shoulder issue.

Yankees manager Aaron Boone said the problem is not considered serious and Judge could start to ramp up activities in a couple days. Judge is expected to be ready for the start of the regular season.

"Just dealing with some crankiness, a little soreness in his shoulder," Boone said. "I feel like it's a pretty minor thing. □

# NFL putting stronger Rooney Rule front and center

By BARRY WILNER

AP Pro Football Writer

Pro football is discovering that the spirit of the Rooney Rule is being violated.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell made that a point of emphasis in his state of the league speech during Super Bowl week. So count on Goodell finding ways to more strongly implement the policy that requires teams to interview minority candidates for coaching and executive positions.

Those interviews still have been taking place, but, to use a word that has taken on highly negative connotations but often is applied nowadays, are they simply tokenism?

Goodell recognized that could be true when he said in January:

"Clearly, we are not where we want to be on this level. We have a lot of work that's gone into not only the Rooney Rule but our policies overall. It's clear we need to change and do something different."

Noting how few minorities are in coaching and general manager jobs right now — the only head coaches are Ron Rivera, Anthony Lynn, Mike Tomlin and Brian Flores, and the GMs are Chris Grier and Andrew Berry — Goodell said:

"There's no reason to expect we're going to have a different outcome next year without those kinds of changes and we've already begun engaging in those changes. Not just with our diversity committee, not just with the Fritz Pollard Alliance, but others. And trying to figure out what steps we could take next that would lead to better outcomes."

Adds Troy Vincent, who oversees football operations for the league and is African American:

"Every club must have a diversity action plan — at the league and across the clubs, it must be an industry standard. Development of the talent pool, which we continue to do that at the commissioner's office. There is a strong pipeline there. And there must

be the education of the (executive) suite to bring more familiarity and to foster trust."

Two of the people Goodell and Vincent are likely to listen to are Hall of Fame coach Tony Dungy, and Steelers owner Art Rooney II, whose father, Dan, championed the Rooney Rule.

Dungy might be the most influential coach in NFL history when it comes to off-field issues. He's been an adviser to Goodell and others at the league for years — even while still coaching the Colts. His voice is an important one, as is his view of the Rooney Rule's application in recent years.

"What I think has happened is people have said, 'Let me interview a minority candidate to satisfy the rule, and then I can get on with this hiring process or hire who I want to,'" Dungy says. "The whole point of the rule was to slow down the process, take your time, get the best candidate and make a decision. But there's so much pressure now on all of them to do it quickly, get the 'No. 1 candidate,' put together a staff. Nobody wants to take their time. That is the major problem."

Dungy and Vincent believe such expedience ignores that there is a deep pool of accomplished candidates. Teams aren't diving into it. "I get a little perturbed when people say we got to put more people in the pipeline, that there are not enough people of color," Dungy says. "I just don't see that. There are a lot of good people."

Vincent echoes such thoughts, with several caveats.

"I just think awareness of candidates," he says. "Immediately I go to barriers of mobility. There's a double standard, which sometimes is not discussed. We are examining now the coaching legacy and number of coaches who now coaching with sons and sons-in-law and brothers/siblings. Those become barriers to entry."



In this Aug. 3, 2019, file photo, former NFL player Tony Dungy is introduced before the induction ceremony at the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

Associated Press

"We also have to look at, are there prohibitors in contracts where coaches being blocked due to language in their contracts?

"It is very difficult for men of color to progress. They are not even in the house, in the pool, because of barriers of mobility."

Art Rooney cautions that there aren't likely any magical fixes that will immediately improve adherence to the spirit of the rule. He believes looking at history and how the rule has worked in the past can be a helpful tool.

"I don't think we can fix everything in one meeting or even one year," Rooney explains. "It's an ongoing process and I don't think there is any silver bullet that if we do one thing, we are going to resolve the situation. There should be some things that can

be done in the short term, but in terms of developing the pipeline further on coaching and executive positions, that would take a longer period of time.

"The first thing we are going to do is talk to people who have been involved in the process and understand what the thinking was. Talk to people who were interviewed, assess where we are and then start to talk to people about ideas on what we can do to improve the situation.

"There have been ideas about attempting to have people slow down the process and just make certain people in the pipeline are getting the attention they should be getting. I would agree there are a lot of good candidates out there, people who should be getting interviews and that doesn't seem to be

happening."

Vincent has a checklist of items to be addressed as soon as possible.

"An intentional training, awareness, and communications plan should be implemented," he says. "In addition, we must encourage a safe nonjudgmental educational environment that seeks to provide a clear understanding of the 'why' behind hiring biases. These things coupled with football and (executive) suite personnel operating under the notion that diversity is good for business, will ultimately provide an opportunity to build the business case for diversity in hiring.

"We must truly examine short term, intermediate, and we've got to have some long-term goals for our business to thrive. Diversity is good business,

## USA Football's player development model adds TackleBar tool

By BARRY WILNER

AP Pro Football Writer

USA Football is introducing another tool as part of its road map for how the sport is played, coached and taught on the youth level: TackleBar football.

As part of USA Football's "Football Development Model" launched last year, TackleBar is included within the model's "limited contact" category, serving as a teaching tool and stepping stone between flag football and the full tackle game. USA Football's model offers multiple entry points and options to play the sport across three categories: non-contact, limited contact and contact.

Players using the TackleBar tool wear a harness with two bars in the back, one on each side. When a defender attempts a tackle, he or she will be able to employ the basics of tackling — head up and out of the way while wrapping up — with limited contact. Players learn to refine their technique without tackling a player to the ground. Instead, one of the bars is pulled from the opponent's harness, ending the play.

TackleBar has been on the market since 2017 and the harness costs \$55; there are shoulder pads also available. Pilot programs beginning in 2016 were a success, and now USA Football, the governing body for the sport, is adopting TackleBar for the FDM.

"This is one aspect, although an exciting one, of our Football Development



This photo provided by USA Football shows football players wearing a harness with two bars that is a new tool as part of TackleBar football.

Associated Press

Model," says USA Football Executive Director and CEO Scott Hallenbeck. "It starts with certified coaches teaching young players in a way that's fun and matches their age and ability. TackleBar is an effective tool to learn form tackling and fundamentals with limited contact. It's a smart way to build skills and experience the sport."

One high school coach who has incorporated TackleBar into his programs is Russ Hinrichs of Alexandria, Minnesota. Hinrichs recognized several years ago the need for an alternative way to get youngsters into the program while addressing concerns parents had in terms of contact football. He found TackleBar a worthwhile op-

tion for fifth and sixth graders.

"It makes for an awesome transition; our kids tackle in seventh grade," Hinrichs says. "This brought back some excitement and a level of organization in the fifth and sixth grades we had not seen. I said this is what we are using at the varsity level — we are using the TackleBar as well in practices. We want the kids to be able to see that, to think, 'If it is good enough for varsity, it's good enough for us.'

"I hate to turn kids off before they grow and feel they can play tackle."

That's exactly what the FDM is all about, Hallenbeck explains.

"The Football Development Model aligns with the

U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee's vision for what sports need to be for our kids," he says. "TackleBar spans an important range of that vision. This is a tool that improves foundational football skills, brings more kids into healthy and active lifestyles, and is part of an exciting learning bridge — a player pathway that football has been without for too long. All of this, coupled with 21st-century coach certification, helps young players graduate to tackle football — and not just play it, but excel in it." The TackleBar equipment dates back to 2013 and it has gone through about 20 iterations of design from its initial concept. The idea has been to create something comfortable, funda-

mentally sound and useful in teaching proper technique. The most recent adjustment tweaked the comfort, rounding out corners on the harness itself so even if a player falls backward, corners are rounded. The device weighs just under a half-pound, the bars are made of foam and attached by Velcro pads.

Testing began in the Twin Cities in youth camps before the 2016 pilot program. Approximately 10,000 youngsters in 27 states have been using it both in youth leagues and high school workouts. Even some colleges have TackleBar on hand.

And now, as part of USA Football's FDM, TackleBar founder Brigid Ling hopes the device will become the default use when players are ready to move on from flag football "but maybe want to wait a few years to play tackle." "I would say it would revolutionize teaching the game because it is at a medium level between tackle and flag," Ling adds. "There's so much strategy and complexity involved in a coach's playbook and this skill includes all of that ... "There is a place for any kid on a football field, especially in those growth years. Anything we can do to keep kids healthy and active and included is important, and football holds all those values. We're keeping the door open to the game. With TackleBar, kids who would not otherwise stay in (it) have come back in." □



LeBron James of the Los Angeles Lakers dribbles during the first half of the NBA All-Star basketball game Sunday, Feb. 16, 2020, in Chicago.

## LeBron: MLB's Manfred needs to listen to players' Astros ire

LOS ANGELES (AP) — LeBron James is stepping to the plate for ballplayers furious over baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred's handling of the Houston Astros' sign-stealing scam.

The four-time NBA MVP and star with the Los Angeles Lakers unleashed in two tweets Tuesday, echoing calls for harsher punishments made by baseball stars Mike Trout, Aaron

Judge and Cody Bellinger, among others.

"Listen I know I don't play baseball but I am in Sports and I know if someone cheated me out of winning the title and I found out about it I would be ... irate!" James tweeted. "I mean like uncontrollable about what I would/could do! Listen here baseball commissioner listen to your.... players speaking today about

how disgusted, mad, hurt, broken, etc etc about this. Literally the ball is in your court(or should I say field) and you need to fix this for the sake of Sports!"

James' tweets included the hashtag #JustMyThoughtsComingFromASportsJunkieRegardlessOfMyOwnSportIPlay".

Trout, a three-time MVP, ripped Houston and questioned MLB's discipline. □

## Continued from page 18

The NCAA's Division I transfer waiver working group said it will seek feedback from athletes, administrators and coaches over the next two months. The group can expect push back from coaches.

Todd Berry, executive director of the American Football Coaches Association, said he was "shocked" by the NCAA's announcement and fears the change will spark a free-agent frenzy that led to restrictions being placed on transfers decades ago.

"It leads to opportunities for recruiting off other campuses," Berry said. "If you're at another program why would you take a high school player? Why not go get one that's already proven in college?"

The working group's concept would change the waiver process, but not NCAA bylaws.

The Division I Board of Directors placed a moratorium on transfer legislation last fall and directed the Council to appoint a working group to examine the transfer waiver process.

The NCAA adjusted waiver criteria two years ago to give more athletes the chance to become immediately eligible, but that has led to complaints about inconsistency in the process. "The current system is unsustainable. Working group members believe it's time to bring our transfer rules more in line with today's college landscape," said Mid-American Conference Commissioner Jon Steinbrecher, who is the chairman of the transfer working group. "This concept pro-

vides a uniform approach that is understandable, predictable and objective. Most importantly, it benefits students." If the transfer working group's concept is adopted, any athlete would be granted immediate eligibility after a transfer if four criteria are met:

- Receive a transfer release from the previous school.
- Leave the previous school academically eligible.
- Maintain academic progress at the new school.
- Leave under no disciplinary suspension.

"More than a third of all college students transfer at least once, and the Division I rule prohibiting immediate competition for students who play five sports hasn't discouraged them from transferring," Steinbrecher said. "This dynamic has strained the waiver process, which was designed to handle extenuating and extraordinary circumstances."

Athletes can currently request a waiver for immediate eligibility for several reasons. The most common are: Claims of athletes being run off a team by a coach; claims of egregious behavior by the original school; injured or ill immediate family member; and injury or illness to the athlete. While several high-profile football players such as Ohio State quarterback Justin Fields and Michigan quarterback Shea Patterson have had waivers granted by the NCAA, plenty of athletes have their requests denied. What has risen is the expectation of immediate eligibility.



In this March 18, 2015, file photo, the NCAA logo is displayed at center court as work continues at The Consol Energy Center in Pittsburgh, for the NCAA college basketball tournament.

Associated Press

"We know that challenges will exist with this concept, particularly as it relates to other coaches potentially tampering with currently enrolled student-athletes," Steinbrecher said in a statement. "The working group will continue to examine this, as well as any potential financial aid and academic impacts, so the Council can make a fully informed decision."

Berry said coaches are mostly supportive of the movement toward providing more benefits to athletes in recent years. The latest part of that movement is the ongoing attempt by the NCAA to find a way to allow college athletes to be compensated for their names, images and likeness. That issue is likely to be settled with the help of federal lawmakers.

Berry said he fears more freedom for transfers will change locker room dynamics and encourage athletes to make rash decisions.

"It might pass, but I'm afraid of what the outcome will be," Berry said. "This is not a hypothetical. The rule was in there for a reason. If they go through with this I'm not sure everybody will like the outcome." □

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## Sex Cancer

By: Carlos M Viana

**Many people might not equate cancer and sex together. We know that sex, through the transmission of the HIV virus can be life threatening, but there are more problems. Cancer is a medical condition where a malignant tumor or growth caused when cells multiply uncontrollably, destroys healthy tissue. There are different forms of cancers that take place in different parts of your body.**

My mother Nora's sister died twenty-five years ago of cervical cancer. Aunt Lila's death angered me at the time because Lila was involved in propagating regular pelvic examinations that could detect early stages of cancer in the cervix for the Public Health Department in Venezuela. Unlike most cancers, cervical cancer can be prevented and if caught early enough can be successfully treated.

A test developed more than 60 years ago by Dr. George Papanicolaou; the Pap smear is now a standard gynecological screening test during a pelvic exam. A Pap smear is a test that will collect cells from the cervix, the lower, end of the uterus. Laboratory analysis of the sample is used to look for abnormalities that might suggest the presence of cervical cancer or infection and inflammation. The American Cancer Society recommends that women have their first Pap smear three years after first having sexual relations, or at age 21 if they have not been sexually active. Professionally, I suggest these tests begin earlier since most young women are sexually active by age sixteen.

The cause of almost all cases of cervical cancer is a virus that is sexually transmitted. Unfortunately, the Pap test may not find abnormal cells until cancer already has developed. Luckily there is a test you can have along with your Pap smear to detect the virus that causes those abnormal cells called the human Papillomavirus test (HPV test).

HPV virus has become an epidemic. In healthy individuals the body's immune system fights the HPV virus before it causes problems. When infected with the HPV virus, changes take place in the body's cells that may develop into cervical cancer if not detected and treated early. Human papilloma virus is the cause of 99.7 percent of all cases of cervical cancer. Worse, cancer that develops from HPV is not limited to the cervix and if the virus infiltrates the lymph

gland system, the cancer-producing virus can travel to any part of the body. Predictably, a woman infected with HPV will contract cancer in her lifetime and will probably eventually die from cancer.

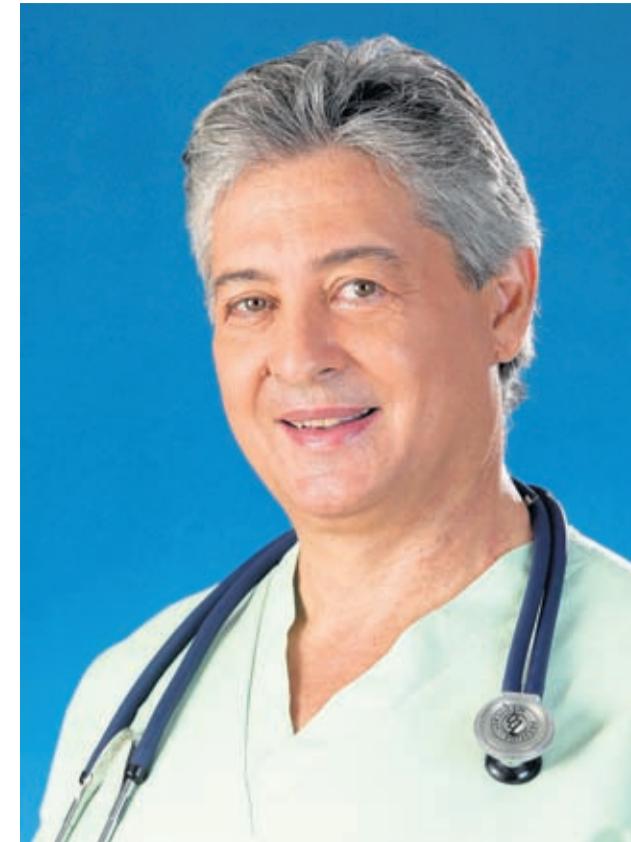
HPV infection is spread by direct skin-to-skin contact with infected body fluids during vaginal, oral, or anal sex. After exposure, warts may begin to appear within several weeks; or they may take months or even years to appear; or they never appear at all. HPV infected men or women who do not appear to have symptoms are as contagious as persons who have visible warts. However, not everyone who has been exposed to the virus will be infected.

Cancer has countless secondary causes, but the basic cause, not enough oxygen in your cells. The HPV virus converts cells from using oxygen to an anaerobic, no oxygen metabolism. Viruses are anaerobic - they cannot exist in a healthy elevated oxygen environment. Influenza, Herpes, Warts, Measles, Canker (Cold) Sores and HPV are all anaerobic. They exist and grow with little or no oxygen present. Increase cellular oxygen levels and these anaerobic diseases cannot replicate and cannot exist. Lack of oxygen in the tissues, because of constant or chronic inflammation is the basic cause for all degenerative disease.

Lack of oxygen in the tissues is a result of a body that is too acidic and is under continuous stress. The wrong foods for your metabolic type, modern over-processed convenience foods, pesticides, toxic heavy metals, and lack of mineral water can all affect your immune system by making your body more acidic. At Viana Natural Healing Center we evaluate health risks and recommend a personal health program to lessen inflammation and strengthen the immune system. This is important for preventative health, but instrumental in supporting the body under any type of stress.

Although there has been a lot of press coverage about HPV vaccine, its protection and side effects are questionable. The vaccine, which has been responsible for several deaths worldwide, hopes to protect young women, and now, men from four different types of HPV virus. So far medical researchers have identified eighteen different HPV types. This is false security.

Once sexually active, a regular pelvic examination with a Pap smear to screen for HPV is



key to a sexually active woman's health. Instrumental for your vaginal and cervical health is to start and continue insisting that a condom be used every time you engage in sex. This not only helps protect from HPV, but healthier for both partners than all alternatives except total abstinence, which may be unrealistic for most of today's youth. Conditions such as vaginitis and yeast infection usually produce symptoms, while cervical dysplasia or cancers often do not. Gynecological examinations may be used to view the cervix or obtain biopsy tissue and freezing therapy may be used to remove abnormal cervical tissue, but nothing will cure you from the HPV virus.

Get The Point! The bad news is that too many women are still getting cervical cancer and are still dying. This, however, can change for the better if women and men insist that their sexual partners use condoms. We need to realize that a woman infected with HPV can give another woman, through sexual contact the virus and infected men, who usually do not show symptoms can infect countless women. To protect our health we need to learn more about the health consequences of sexual contact and realize that by being careful it does not mean that you trust your partner any less. Call for an appointment. Let us teach you how to keep cancer and other diseases out of your love life.

□

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## A rare miss for Walmart to end the year

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO  
AP Retail Writer

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Walmart reported disappointing fourth-quarter profits and sales after a sluggish and shortened holiday shopping season.

Violent social protests in Chile, where there are hundreds of Walmart stores, cut into international sales. Walmart also delivered a weak profit forecast for the year and a rare quarterly miss, its worst in about five years.

"We started and finished the quarter with momentum, while sales leading up to Christmas in our U.S. stores were a little softer than expected," said CEO Doug McMillon.

Walmart is the first major retailer to report fiscal fourth-quarter results. The performance underscores a multitude of challenges that retailers faced this holiday season as they try to better compete with online juggernaut Amazon. The discounter said that U.S. sales at stores opened at least 12 months rose just 1.9% for the holiday quarter, a slowdown from the previous period. The company joined other retailers who reported disappointing holiday sales last month.

It was the shortest holiday shopping season since 2013, leaving retailers scrambling to figure out how to get people thinking about the holidays sooner. The ongoing trade war with China has raised costs for most and now, a new virus in China is hitting a huge customer base as well as manufacturing facilities and supply chains.

The challenges come on the back of a slew of bankruptcies as retailers attempt to satisfy a customer who has gone increasingly online, one who demands speedy delivery and returns.

Walmart, which operates more than 400 stores in China, didn't include the potential impact of coronavirus in its forecast because of uncertainty over how it will play out over

the next year. But executives believe the disruption is likely to shave a few pennies off earnings per share in the current quarter. One blessing: Walmart emphasized that two-thirds of the items it sells — mostly food — are sourced from the U.S. The remainder comes from a variety of countries like Mexico, China and other regions of Asia.

Walmart and Target have stood out among retailers, having ramped up deliveries and other conveniences for customers, but Target Corp. also struggled during the holiday due to weak sales of toys and electronics.

Walmart continued to produce strong results from its grocery aisles, helped by expanded online delivery. It now has 3,200 locations for grocery pickup and 1,600 locations that offer grocery delivery. Last fall, it launched "Delivery Unlimited," which costs \$98 annually and \$12.95 monthly for unlimited grocery delivery. It also launched a delivery service in three cities, giving customers the option to let its own delivery person put purchases directly into the refrigerator when they're not home.

Walmart's same-store sales of 1.9% this quarter were well below the 3.2% increase in the previous period. It was, however, the 22nd consecutive quarter of same-store sales gains. The company blamed the shortfall on several merchandising mistakes like too much clothing that was seasonal and low-priced.

Online sales in the U.S. rose 35%, weaker than the 41% increase booked in the previous quarter. For the year, U.S. online sales rose 37%. For the current fiscal year, the company's online sales should be up 30%, to \$50 billion. Walmart said that losses in its U.S. e-commerce division will either level off or decline for the current year.

"It is fair to say that unlike past quarters Walmart was not firing on all cylinders during the last part of the



This June 25, 2019, file photo shows the entrance to a Walmart in Pittsburgh.

Associated Press

year," said Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData Retail, in a report published Tuesday. But he added that Walmart remains in a "good place."

"It is well managed, has clear plans and plenty of determination," he said.

Moody's lead Walmart analyst Charlie O'Shea said that when one looks at the previous quarters, "Walmart set the bar high."

"It was just a weird quarter," O'Shea said.

Net income was \$4.14 billion, or \$1.45 per share, in the quarter ended Jan. 31. That compares with \$3.69 billion, or \$1.27 per share, in the same period a year ago. Adjusted earnings per share was \$1.38. Analysts

were expecting \$1.44 per share, according to FactSet.

Revenue rose 2.1% to \$140.6 billion, shy of the \$141.5 billion Wall Street was looking for.

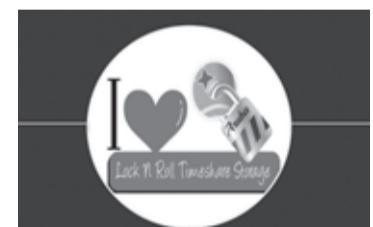
Walmart said three quarters of its nearly 400 stores in Chile were badly damaged during violent anti-government protests that began in October. Demonstrations began after an increase in the subway fare, but have grown to encompass grievances about pensions, education, health care and other issues.

Walmart does not expect the situation in Chile to normalize this year.

Separately, Walmart approved a cash dividend for

fiscal year 2021 of \$2.16 per share, an increase from the \$2.12 per share last year. The company will pay the dividend in quarterly installments of 54 cents per share. Walmart Inc. expects annual per-share earnings of between \$5 and \$5.15, short of the \$5.21 that industry analysts had projected.

In afternoon trading, shares rose a little more than 1%, or \$1.49, to \$119.38. □

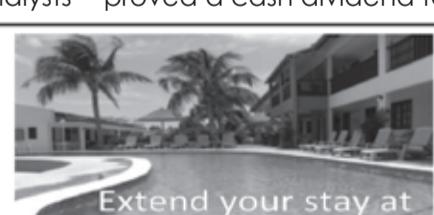


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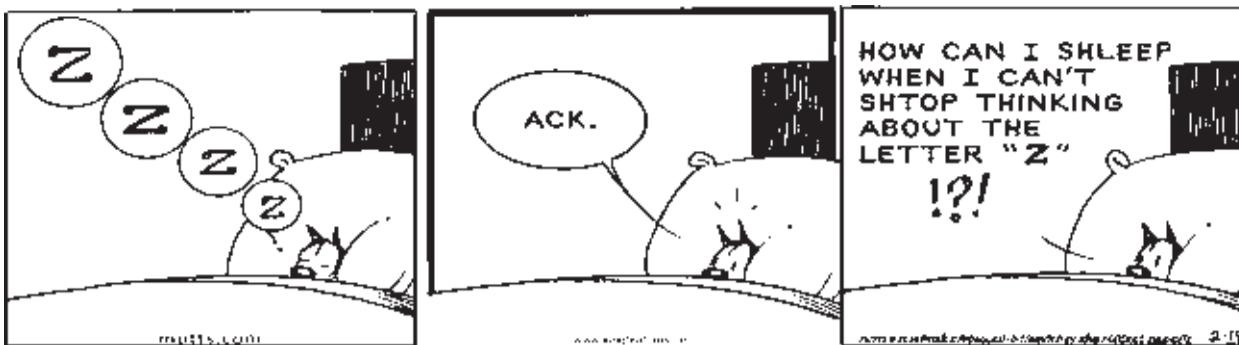
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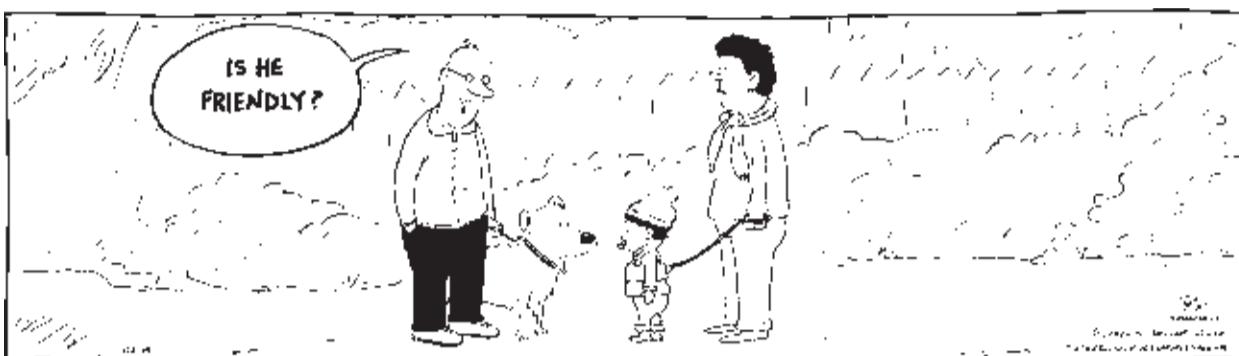
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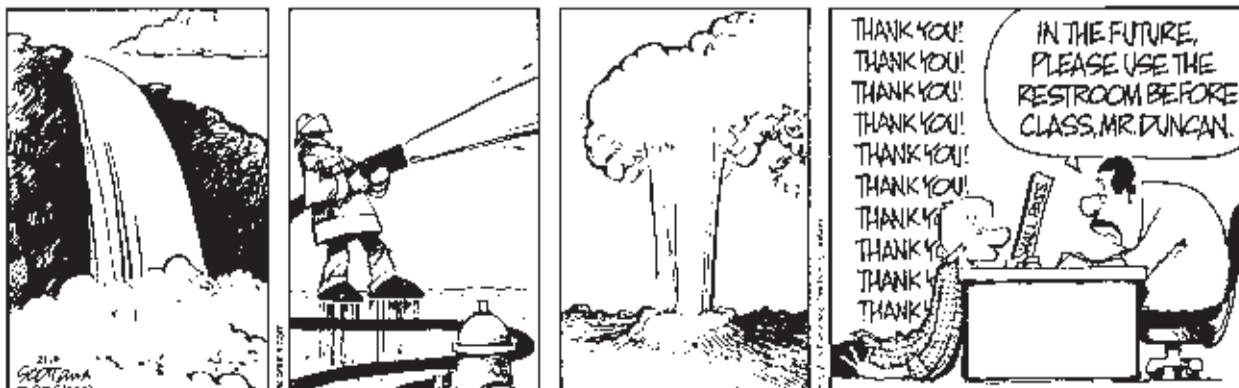
Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|   | 9 | 6 |   | 1 |
| 5 |   | 4 | 1 |   |
| 7 | 3 |   |   |   |
| 1 | 8 | 2 | 7 | 3 |
| 9 |   | 4 | 8 | 2 |
| 6 |   | 8 | 9 | 7 |
| 2 |   |   |   | 5 |
|   | 5 |   | 9 | 1 |
| 7 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 3 |

Difficulty Level ★★★

Conceptis Puzzles Inc. 2019

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 3 | 2 | 4 |
| 3 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 8 |
| 9 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 1 |
| 2 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 7 |
| 5 | 6 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| 8 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 9 | 1 | 6 |
| 7 | 1 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 3 | 2 |
| 6 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 7 | 4 | 1 | 8 | 9 |
| 4 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 7 | 5 |

Yesterday's puzzle answer



ACROSS

1. Jack Sprat could eat no
4. Blaze residue
5. Vastly
6. Game cubes
13. Disraeli
15. Hawaiian sand
16. In a while; occasionally
17. U.S. state capital
19. Vacuole grade
20. Leo XIII & Pius X
21. Expand
22. Hideaways
24. White lie
25. Bulbs
27. Game oss
30. Aneurysm site
31. Say he o'er
33. Pigeon's cry
35. The night before Christmas...
36. Peacock
37. Read over quickly
38. All fully prepared
39. Devilishness
40. Piece of playground equipment
41. Perfect refund to a buyer
43. Knight and the P's
44. That's What Friends For
45. Gooey mud
46. Wading bird
49. Blossom
51. Org. for Bu's & Blocks
54. Brave
55. Go no further
56. Wood-shaping tool
58. Tales
59. Ok-a-to-Ark direction
60. Night light
61. Live a garden after the rain
62. Jumper & Roker
63. One of the Seven Dwarfs
64. Speedy
65. Middle East bread
66. Pay divisions
67. Nourish
68. Dries
69. Crew member
70. Decade untrue
71. Unimanced
72. Flatterer
73. Delight
74. Go bad
75. Singles
76. Don't off
77. Close noisy
78. Hooded jacket
79. Stenographer
80. Like a desolate stretch of land
81. Shiny
82. Noise
83. Rip-off
84. Fuss and bother
85. Greek squeak
86. Boyfriend
87. To kien's
88. The of the Rings
89. Supervisor
90. Isn't. Id:
91. probably won't
92. PE class building
93. Baltic or Black

Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

|            |            |       |
|------------|------------|-------|
| CROW       | CASTS      | SLAT  |
| RUSE       | ODIST      | POLO  |
| ONCE       | MANUSCRIPT |       |
| PSI        | GIGS       | RINSE |
| LANGE      | KEG        |       |
| WALRUS     | COASTS     |       |
| ADAMS      | BLOOM      | UPS   |
| ROTS       | CAULK      | TRIO  |
| ERE        | LUNGE      | SOBER |
| ESTATE     | TUMULT     |       |
| IRE        | CREEL      |       |
| STORK      | SHED       | ERA   |
| NOVASCOTIA | KNEE       |       |
| AGED       | ALERT      | ICED  |
| GONE       | PEPPY      | MELS  |

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

2/19/20

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1. Well, you're a one to talk!
2. Speed up
3. One; start of a 600+ pound
4. Boyfriend
5. To kien's
6. The of the Rings
7. Supervisor
8. Isn't. Id:
9. probably won't
10. PE class building
11. Baltic or Black
12. Close noisy
13. Hooded jacket
14. Stenographer
15. Like a desolate stretch of land
16. Shiny
17. Noise
18. Rip-off
19. Fuss and bother
20. Greek squeak
21. Boyfriend
22. To kien's
23. The of the Rings
24. Supervisor
25. Isn't. Id:
26. probably won't
27. PE class building
28. Baltic or Black

## Apple warns China virus will cut iPhone production, sales

CUPERTINO, Calif. (AP) — Apple Inc. is warning investors that it won't meet its second-quarter financial guidance because the viral outbreak in China has cut production of iPhones. The Cupertino, California-based company said Monday that all of its iPhone manufacturing facilities are outside Hubei province, the epicenter of the outbreak, and all have been reopened. But the company said production is ramping up slowly.

"The health and well-being of every person who helps make these products possible is our paramount priority, and we are working in close consultation with our suppliers and public health experts as this ramp continues," Apple said in a statement. □

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| Noord          | 527 3200 |
| Sta. Cruz      | 527 2900 |
| San Nicolas    | 584 5000 |
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| Ambulancia     | 911      |
| Fire Dept.     | 115      |
| Red Cross      | 582 2219 |

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|                  |          |
|------------------|----------|
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February 19

Monarch

February 20

Carnival Magic

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Narcotics Anonymous  
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# Experts ponder why cruise ship quarantine failed in Japan

By MARIA CHENG and MARI YAMAGUCHI

**TOKYO (AP)** — As an extraordinary two-week quarantine of a cruise ship ends Wednesday in Japan, many scientists say it was a failed experiment: The ship seemed to serve as an incubator for the new virus from China instead of an isolation facility meant to prevent the worsening of an outbreak.

Since the virus was identified late last year in central China, it has sickened tens of thousands of people and killed more than 1,800. As of Tuesday, 542 cases of the virus, known as COVID-19, have been identified among the 3,711 quarantined passengers and crew, making the ship the site of the most infections outside of China. The Diamond Princess cruise ship is also the only place where health officials have seen the disease spread easily among people beyond China.

The question now is: Why? The Japanese government has repeatedly defended the effectiveness of the quarantine. But some experts suggest it may have been less than rigorous.

In a possible sign of lax quarantine protocols, three Japanese health officials who helped in the quarantine checks on the ship were also infected.

"There are sometimes environments in which disease can spread in a more efficient way," said Dr. Michael Ryan, executive director of the World Health Organization's health emergencies program. Ryan said cruise ships in particular were known to occasionally accelerate spread.

"It's an unfortunate event occurring on the ship and we trust that the authorities



A bus carrying passengers from the quarantined Diamond Princess cruise ship leaves a port in Yokohama, near Tokyo, Monday, Feb. 17, 2020.

Associated Press

in Japan and the governments who are taking back people will be able to follow up those individuals in the appropriate way," he said.

Japan's health minister, Katsunobu Kato, told reporters Tuesday that all passengers who remained on the cruise ship have had samples taken and that those who tested negative would start getting off the vessel beginning Wednesday, when their required 14-day quarantine is scheduled to end.

"They all want to go home as early as possible, and we hope to assist them so that everyone can get home smoothly," Kato said.

But it may not be that simple. U.S. health officials on Tuesday told Americans who declined to come home on government-chartered flights over the weekend that they wouldn't be allowed back into the country for at least 14 days after they had left the Diamond Princess.

"Obviously the quarantine hasn't worked, and this ship has now become a source of infection," said Dr. Nathalie MacDermott, an outbreak expert at King's College London.

She said the exact mechanism of the virus' spread was unknown. Although scientists believe the disease is spread mostly by droplets — when people cough or sneeze — it's possible there are other ways of transmission.

"We need to understand how the quarantine measures on board were implemented, what the air filtration on board is like, how the cabins are connected and how waste products are disposed of," MacDermott said.

"There could also be another mode of transmission we're not familiar with," she said, noting the possibility of environmental spread and the importance of "deep-cleaning" the entire ship to prevent people from touching contaminated surfaces.

During the 2002-2003 outbreak of SARS, a related virus, more than 300 people were infected through a defective sewage system in a Hong Kong housing estate. MacDermott said it was possible there was a similar issue aboard the Diamond Princess.

"There's no reason this

(quarantine) should not have worked if it had been done properly," she said.

Cruise ships have sometimes been struck by outbreaks of diseases like norovirus, which can spread quickly in the close quarters of a boat and among elderly passengers with weaker immune systems. But MacDermott said it would be highly unusual for an entire boat to be quarantined.

"They might quarantine the people affected in their rooms until they're 48 hours clear of symptoms, but certainly not all passengers," she said.

Some passengers on the Diamond Princess described the ship as a "floating prison" but were allowed to walk on the decks every day while wearing a mask and were told to keep their distance from others.

"I suspect people were not as isolated from other people as we would have thought," said Dr. Paul Hunter, a professor of medicine at the University of East Anglia in England. He said the continued spread of the virus could be due to compliance problems.

"It's difficult to enforce a quarantine in a ship environment and I'm absolutely sure there were some passengers who think they're not going to let anyone tell them what they can and

cannot do," he said. He suggested that if the passengers had been quarantined on land, having more space might have allowed for better infection control procedures. But he acknowledged that attempting to quarantine more than 3,700 people was logistically challenging.

Hunter said it was "a huge disappointment" that the quarantine hadn't curbed the spread of the virus and that it was unfortunate some passengers returning to their home countries would now face a second period of isolation.

"Given how the virus has continued to spread, we have to presume everyone leaving the ship is potentially infected, and therefore they have to go through another two-week quarantine period," he said. "Not to do so would be reckless."

Japanese health officials say a 14-day quarantine on the ship is adequate, noting that all but one of more than 500 Japanese returnees from the epicenter of the virus in China who initially tested negative were found to be virus-free at the end of their 14-day quarantine.

Those officials also defended precautions taken on the ship. About 1,000 crew members were told to wear surgical masks, wash their hands, use disinfectant sprays and stop operations at restaurants, bars and other entertainment areas after Feb. 5, when the first group of 10 infections was reported and the start of the 14-day quarantine was announced.

Passengers were instructed to stay in their cabins and not walk around or contact other passengers. Those in windowless cabins could go out on the deck for about an hour each day.

The quarantine was largely for passengers because crew members kept sharing double rooms and continued to serve guests by delivering food, letters, towels and amenities, and entering passenger cabins for cleaning. Crew members also ate in groups in a crew mess hall. □

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# 'True Grit' novelist Charles Portis dies at age 86

By HILLEL ITALIE

Associated Press

**NEW YORK (AP)** — Novelist Charles Portis, a favorite among critics and writers for such shaggy dog stories as "Norwood" and "Gringos" and a bounty for Hollywood whose droll, bloody Western "True Grit" was a best-seller twice adapted into Oscar nominated films, died Monday at age 86.

Portis, a former newspaper reporter who apparently learned enough to swear off talking to the media, had been suffering from Alzheimer's in recent years. His brother, Jonathan Portis, told The Associated Press that he died in a hospice in Little Rock, Arkansas, his longtime residence.

Charles Portis was among the most admired authors to nearly vanish from public consciousness in his own lifetime. His fans included Tom Wolfe, Roy Blount Jr. and Larry McMurtry, and he was often compared to Mark Twain for his plain-spoken humor and wry perspective. Portis saw the world from the ground up, from bars and shacks and trailer homes, and few spun wilder and funnier stories.

In a Portis novel, usually set in the South and south of the border, characters embarked on journeys that took the most unpredictable detours.

In "Norwood," an ex-Marine from Texas heads East in a suspicious car to collect a suspicious debt, but winds up on a bus with a circus dwarf, a chicken and a girl he just met. "The Dog of the South" finds one Ray Midge driving from Arkansas to Honduras in search of his wife, his credit cards and his Ford Torino. In "Gringos," an expatriate in Mexico with a taste for order finds himself amid hippies, end-of-the-world cultists and disappearing friends.

The public knew Portis best for "True Grit," the quest of Arkansas teen Mattie Ross to avenge her father's murder. The novel was serialized in the Saturday Evening Post in 1968 and was soon adapted (and softened) as a film showcase for John Wayne,



who starred as Rooster Cogburn, the drunken, one-eyed marshal Mattie enlists to find the killer. The role brought Wayne his first Academy Award and was revived by the actor, much less successfully, in the sequel "Rooster Cogburn." Rooster was so strong a character that a new generation of filmgoers and Oscar voters welcomed him back. In 2010, the Coen brothers worked up a less glossy, more faithful "True Grit," featuring Jeff Bridges as Rooster and newcomer Hallie Steinfeld as Mattie. The film received 10 nominations, including best actor for Bridges, and brought new attention to Portis and his novel, which topped the trade paperback list of The New York Times.

"No living Southern writer captures the spoken idioms of the South as artfully as Portis does," Mississippi native Donna Tartt wrote in an afterword for a 2005 reissue of the novel.

Portis was born in 1933 in El Dorado, Arkansas, one of four children of a school superintendent and a housewife whom Portis thought could have been a writer herself. As a kid, he loved comic books and movies and the stories he learned from his family. In a brief memoir written for The Atlantic Monthly, he recalled growing up in a community where the ratio was about "two Baptist churches or one Methodist church per gin. It usually took about three gins to support a Presbyterian church, and a community with, say, four before you found enough tepid idolators to form an Episcopal congregation." He was a natural raconteur who credited his stint in the Marines with giving him time to read. After leaving the service, he graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1958 with a degree in journalism and for the next few years was a newspaper man, starting

as a night police reporter for the Memphis Commercial Appeal and finishing as London bureau chief for the New York Herald Tribune.

Fellow Tribune staffers included Wolfe, who regarded Portis as "the original laconic cutup" and a fellow rebel against the boundaries of journalism, and Nora Ephron, who would remember her colleague as a sociable man with a reluctance to use a telephone. His interview subjects included Malcolm X and J.D. Salinger, whom Portis encountered on an airplane. He was also a first-hand observer of the civil rights movement. In 1963, he covered a riot and the police beating of black people in Birmingham, Alabama. Around the same time, he reported on a Ku Klux Klan meeting, a dullish occasion after which "the grand dragon of Mississippi disappeared grandly into the Southern night, his car

engine hitting on about three cylinders."

Anxious to write novels, Portis left the paper in 1964 and from Arkansas completed "Norwood," published two years later and adapted for a 1970 movie of the same name starring Glen Campbell and Joe Namath.

Portis placed his stories in familiar territory. He knew his way around Texas and Mexico and worked enough with women stringers from the Ozarks in Arkansas to draw upon them for Mattie's narrative voice in "True Grit." He eventually settled in Little Rock, where he reportedly spent years working on a novel that was never released. "Gringos," his fifth and last novel, came out in 1991.

Portis published short fiction in The Atlantic during the 1990s, but was mostly forgotten before admiring essays in Esquire and the New York Observer by Ron Rosenbaum were noticed by publishing director Tracy Carns of the Overlook Press, which reissued all of Portis' novels. Some of his journalism, short stories and travel writings were published in the 2012 anthology "Escape Velocity."

In recent years, the author lived in open seclusion, a regular around Little Rock who drove a pickup truck, enjoyed an occasional beer and stepped away from reporters. He did turn up to collect The Oxford American's Award for Lifetime Achievement in Southern Literature and was known to answer the occasional letter from a reader. But otherwise Portis seemed to honor Mattie's code in "True Grit" for how to deal with journalists.

"I do not fool around with newspapers," Mattie says. "The paper editors are great ones for reaping where they have not sown. Another game they have is to send reporters out to talk to you and get your stories free. I know the young reporters are not paid well and I would not mind helping those boys out with their 'scoops' if they could ever get anything right." □



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Margot Robbie in a scene from "Birds of Prey." (Claudette Barius/Warner Bros. Pictures via AP)

By JOCELYN NOVECK

At one point in "Birds of Prey," crime lord Roman

Sionis, aka Ewan McGregor, sits down with a tub of popcorn to watch Harley Quinn

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## Review: A charismatic Robbie gives Harley Quinn her wings

suffer through a brutal interrogation.

He's a psychopath — well, so is Harley, for that matter — but Roman has the right idea. As portrayed by the effortlessly charismatic Margot Robbie, Harley's always gonna be the most interesting person in the room — or on the screen. Grab your popcorn, indeed.

Robbie is certainly killing it these days, and we're not just talking about the escalating body count (especially if you include violence by glitter gun) in this visually arresting and often clever — if not particularly profound — installment of the DC Extended Universe. Heartbreaking in "Bombshell" and poignant in "Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood," Robbie is looking more and more like she can do most anything.

And she's a producer here, too, as if being a ginormous movie star at age 29 weren't enough. But back to "Birds of Prey," or more precisely, "Birds of Prey (And the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn)," an extended title that hints at what Robbie, director Cathy Yan and screenwriter Christina Hodson are trying to do: free Harley once and for all from her ex-boyfriend, that Joker guy, and plant her firmly within a girl gang.

And even though the Joker is all the rage these days, thanks to Joaquin Phoenix in that other movie, Harley proves a worthy subject of her own film, especially with her intriguing background (a PhD and perhaps a medical degree), her broken past, and her "obsessive-compulsive need for attention," in her words. It's a shame the

movie doesn't dig deeper into some of these idiosyncratic intricacies of character — but hey, there's always the sequel.

You don't need much previous knowledge to get up to speed, thanks to a clever animated intro, narrated by Harley (in a less-than-convincing Brooklyn-Gotham accent, it must be said). Born Harleen Quinzel, Harley became a shrink only to fall in love with Mr. J at Arkham, proving once again that advanced degrees are no protection against bad taste in boyfriends.

As the action begins, Harley has been given the boot by her mercurial lover. "I handled it real mature," she notes with sarcasm. Revenge is topmost on her mind. She decides to blow up the Ace Chemicals Processing Plant, a place important to the Joker, just as some people "have their Eiffel Tower, or their Olive Garden."

Harley quickly learns that a byproduct of her new singleness is that she's no longer shielded by people's fear of the Joker — in other words, everyone she ever slighted is now out to get her. And those slights, we learn in a witty, lightning-quick graphic, include everything from possessing a female reproductive organ to — did we catch this right? — voting for Bernie, presumably against Hillary. Most dangerously, her new enemies include Roman and his sadistic assistant, Zsasz (Chris Messina). Roman likes to hang people upside down and order their faces scalped off, but in McGregor's wry performance, he's less than terrifying, especially compared

to Zsasz who is truly, deeply creepy.

Without going too far into plot here — the movie's title stretched our word count, anyway — let's just quickly mention that things really get going when young pickpocket Cassandra Cain (Ella Jay Basco) steals and then swallows a precious diamond, in which crucial secrets are embedded. Harley offers to get the diamond; otherwise, Roman will kill her. The other major players, joining forces to fight Roman, are Montoya, a tough Gotham detective (the reliable Rosie Perez); Black Canary, or singer Dinah Lance (a lovely Jurnee Smollett-Bell); and the Huntress, aka Helena Bertinelli (an understated Mary Elizabeth Winstead), a mob daughter bent on avenging her family's killers.

Ultimately it all rides on Robbie, who, along with her blond, color-dipped pigtails, brings an appealing blend of looniness and grit to the role, and a hint of something sadder and darker. Still, one gets the sense the filmmakers weren't quite sure how far to go with the feminism thing. When she says sadly that "a harlequin's nothing without a master," you don't immediately get the sense that this is a post #MeToo Harley Quinn.

Like we said, there's always the sequel.

"Birds of Prey," a Warner Bros Pictures release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America "for strong violence and language throughout, and some sexual and drug material." Running time: 109 minutes. Three stars out of four. □

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## White House correspondents' dinner returns to comedic roots

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

**WASHINGTON (AP)** — Comedians are making their return to the White House Correspondents' Dinner after last year's hiatus.

Kenan Thompson of "Saturday Night Live" and Hasan Minhaj of Netflix's "Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj" will headline this year's dinner, which takes place April 25. Presidents and first ladies have traditionally attended the dinner, which serves as a celebration of the First Amendment as well as a fundraiser for college scholarships. Reporting awards are given out as well.

But President Donald Trump has skipped the dinner

throughout his presidency and instead has elected to hold campaign rallies. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment about whether the president would attend this year. Last year's dinner featured Pulitzer Prize-winning author Ron Chernow after some dinner attendees and commentators complained that a sharply anti-Trump performance by comedian Michelle Wolf in 2018 was too pointed and unfairly targeted then-White House press secretary Sarah Sanders.

Thompson will serve as this year's host. Minhaj will be the featured entertainer.



FILE - In this Sept. 17, 2018, file photo Kenan Thompson presents the award for outstanding drama series at the 70th Primetime Emmy Awards at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles.

"Kenan and Hasan are two of the most engaged and engaging entertainers in America. I'm thrilled they'll help us celebrate the role

of a free press in our democracy," said Jonathan Karl, Chief White House correspondent for ABC News and president of the White

House Correspondents' Association.

Thompson is currently in his 17th season on "Saturday Night Live" where he has set a record for the most celebrity impressions performed on the show. In 2018, he received an Emmy Award for Outstanding Original Music and Lyrics and a nomination for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Comedy Series.

Minhaj won a Peabody award in 2019 for his humorous examination of issues of domestic and global import. He was the entertainer at the 2017 correspondents' dinner when he was a senior correspondent on "The Daily Show." □



FILE - In this Aug. 28, 2019, file photo, Opera star Plácido Domingo listens to applause at the end of a concert in Szeged, Hungary.

Associated Press

## Israeli Opera to host Plácido Domingo despite protest

**JERUSALEM (Associated Press)** — Despite objections from sexual abuse activists, the Israeli Opera will host a week-long singing competition organized by Spanish opera star Plácido Domingo in Tel Aviv later this year.

Domingo, 80, has withdrawn from all U.S. performances since reports by The Associated Press last year detailed accusations of sexual harassment or other inappropriate, sexually charged conduct.

While American outlets have dropped Domingo, he continues to perform in Europe. He received a

standing ovation in Milan in December and had two sold out shows in Berlin in January. Domingo's Operalia, an annual opera singing competition, will take place at Tel Aviv's opera house from Oct. 22 to 28. The Israeli Opera's decision to host Domingo in spite of the allegations against him has angered Israeli activists.

The Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel wrote on its Facebook page that "the entire world is renouncing the serial assaulter, and only Israel receives him with open arms." □

## Winfrey holds TV discussion on 'American Dirt' in Arizona

**TUCSON, Ariz. (Associated Press)** — Oprah Winfrey's soon-to-be televised discussion about the controversial novel "American Dirt" is drawing scrutiny for not inviting some of the book's harshest Latino critics.

The talk show host organized her much-hyped conversation with author Jeanine Cummins on Thursday after inviting around 250 people to the Harkins Theatres Arizona Pavilions in southern Arizona, the Arizona Daily Star reports. The crowd was then directed to another Tucson, Arizona, location and asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement. The discussion will be the next episode in Winfrey's new Apple TV+ series Oprah's Book Club, which features personal conversations with authors in front of a live audience.

Details of the gathering were not known since the audience was banned from speaking about the event until after the show airs in March.

The novel about a Mexican mother and her young son fleeing to the U.S. border had been praised widely before its Jan. 21 release. But anger built over alle-



Oprah Winfrey participates in "Oprah's 2020 Vision: Your Life in Focus" tour at the Barclays Center on Saturday, Feb. 8, 2020, in New York. (Photo by Brad Barket/Invision/AP)

gations the book relied on stereotypes, caricatures, and material similar to another Latino writer.

Latino critics also blasted promotions at book release parties that had floral art centerpieces with barbed wire mimicking the border wall.

Oprah chose the novel for her book club shortly after its release, drawing more anger from Latino critics.

In a video posted on Instagram following the criticism, Winfrey said she now realizes the book struck "an emotional chord" with Latinos and created a need for deeper conversation.

On Wednesday, the group #DignidadLiteraria posted

an open letter to Winfrey on the site Literary Hub calling for deeper conversations about "the continued underrepresentation of (Latino) authors in publishing and in your highly influential book club."

The letter mentioned the Tucson event and called for a private meeting with Winfrey and their movement.

"We urge to you open your mind and heart to actual Latinos the way you have publicly declared you did to Jeanine's fictional characters," the letter read.

Writer Roberto Lovato, one of the signers of the letter, wrote on Twitter about not receiving an invitation to Winfrey's Tucson event. □

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